

Parables and Principles of Christian Communication

A Study of the Parable of the Good Samaritan from an Interactive Perspective and Its Relevance to Christian Media Practice, with Particular Reference to the South Indian Context.

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to develop a theological basis for an interactive approach to Christian communication from the analysis of Jesus' parables. In this interactive approach, there is an emphasis on the role of the audience in communication even before the message is being communicated. The aim and method of this study are introduced in chapter 1. The need for this approach is identified in chapter 2 by reference to reports from WCC Assemblies and documents of Pontifical commissions. An interactive perspective is developed from James Carey's understanding of communication while the theological basis is derived from Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication. In this perspective communication is understood as a process in which the communicator and the audience share, participate and interact. The theological basis of this concept sees God as a participant in the human communication process regardless of its limitations and demands. This study emphasises the role of the audience in the construction of meanings even before they engage in receiving. Thus it identifies the need for the Christian communicators to participate in the audience's communication process in order to share the gospel with them.

The main task of this research is to identify such an interactive approach in the teachings of Jesus. In chapter 3 it is argued that Jesus interacted with his hearers through the parables. To participate in his hearers' communication process Jesus shared their beliefs and worldview and he also used their forms of communication. This research analyses Jesus' method of parabolic communication with a particular reference to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The study of the parable of the Good Samaritan reveals that Jesus shared his hearers' religious expressions (such as 'eternal life', the law) and the beliefs associated with them. It also shows that he engaged in their communication process by using characters, plots and aesthetic elements that were familiar to them. His parables reflected and addressed the issues arising out of their context. The parable of the Good Samaritan portrays Jesus as one who shared, participated and interacted with his hearers.

In chapter 4, this interaction between Jesus and his hearers is studied within the wider context of the synoptic gospels. The parables display a wide range of meanings and relate their meanings to other contemporary cultural and political issues. These meanings also enable his hearers to interpret their beliefs and to relate them to their context. By identifying these principles, it is argued that Jesus started from the place where his hearers were and engaged with them. This study of Jesus' parables provides a basis for this interactive approach and highlights the need for a similar theological approach among his followers.

Chapter 5 develops certain principles of Christian communication from the findings of the study of Jesus' parabolic communication. These principles are verified with the help of two video programmes produced by the diocese of Tirunelveli where the author was directly involved as a missionary, musician, priest and media worker. While looking positively at the video ministry of the diocese, this study also proposes certain strategies and policies for the diocese and for churches in other places. A number of models of Christian communication that are relevant to the practice of video ministry in India are proposed. There is a need to translate this theological basis into the training of theologians in India. In the conclusion this study therefore proposes that such strategies and policies be adopted by the Theological Institutions in India. In this way their training might contribute to the wider interaction between the churches and the Indian audience and so help to further the mission of the church.

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Declaration

I certify that the following thesis is my original work. It is the result of research carried out at the Divinity Faculty of the University of Edinburgh from October 1996 to January 2000. Some elements of the thesis are published and are duly acknowledged.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introducing an Interactive Perspective on Christian Communication

The main task of this interdisciplinary research is to develop certain principles of Christian communication which would enable the churches in India to interact more effectively with the media and culture of the day. In India the mass media are controlled by the government to which the church has limited access. The churches in India try to communicate the gospel with a wider audience using media such as audio and videocassettes and journals. The “churches in India” refers to the Church of South India, the Church of North India, the Catholic churches in India and other major churches in North East of India.

Even though the churches in India, in particular the Church of South India (CSI), are ecumenical in nature, many of them have a particular theological leaning which is reflected in their attitude towards the media. Many of them have a fear of the media in general [David 1980]. They find it necessary to engage with the media but do so on their own terms. Even when the churches get an opportunity to use the media they try to achieve their own goals. One of the purposes of using the media is to evangelise the masses. This is seen as an extension of the pulpit. The perspective of communication generally adopted is often non-participatory and non-interactive. This perspective is not only true of the churches’ approach but applies also to the Indian attitude to the media in general.

In the Christian media and non-Christian media in India, the few speak to many and communication is assumed to flow from the centre outwards. This is

ingrained in the culture of media practitioners and is reinforced by theoreticians who have provided a theoretical basis for this autocratic practice. Even though there are many attempts to move away from this approach, this perspective is still often implicit in practice. The vast majority of people think that they can do nothing to change the attitude of the mass media and see themselves as powerless subjects. On the other hand people in South India share several other cultural forms of communication that are participatory and democratic in nature such as Kollattam (folk dance) and story telling. Certain media, such as video films and village theatres, have enabled them to extend such cultural practice of engagement in the villages. Such practices reinforce the concept that the reality of communication is not in the media but in the audiences.

There is a need for the churches to widen such practices of communication and to engage with the Christian and non-Christian audiences in their communication. The primary task of this research is to identify the potential role the church could play in the field of communication in India aside from the existing methods. It is an attempt to change the attitude of the churches in India towards communication and so a realistic vision for a more effective ministry. This would presuppose a new theological basis for the churches' communication practice in India. There is also a search for an alternative perspective that would promote a more realistic base for an inclusive and participatory style of communication in general.

This study attempts to address such issues from an exegetical dimension using a qualitative approach. This alternative perspective, and its theological basis, is developed by bringing together Carey's cultural view of communication and Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication. In this perspective,

communication is understood as an ongoing social process in which the communicator and the audience are engaged in sharing, participating and interacting among themselves through a medium. This perspective emphasises the importance of recognising the role of the audience in communication even before the message is communicated. The basic questions in this research are how biblical studies can illuminate the understanding of communication and how human communication, as a phenomenon, can affect the theological understanding of communication. As yet the interface between theology and communication has not been sufficiently explored from a biblical hermeneutic basis. This is the beginning of a process which combines the theology of the New Testament with a study of communication.

In this study one of the synoptic parables is analysed from this alternative perspective in order to develop the thesis that Jesus himself participated and interacted with his hearers in a distinctive way. This distinction is highlighted by an emphasis on the three main characteristics of the interaction in some parables, which are sharing the hearers' religious beliefs, participating in their communication and interacting with their worldview. The study on Jesus' use of the parables tends to identify the extent to which he gave importance to his hearers in his communication. The parable of the Good Samaritan is selected for analysis because the three main characteristics of the interaction are explicitly displayed in its content and context. Certain principles are derived from the study of this parable in order to relate the theological basis to the practice.

Practical applications of these principles are demonstrated with the help of two videocassette films produced by my home diocese of Tirunelveli, Church of South India. I propose certain models, policies and strategies that might be adopted

by the churches in India and their communicators. An attempt is made to develop a theological basis that would encourage the churches in India to become involved in communication with a wider audience, whether Christian or non-Christian, by sharing their media and forms of communication.

2. The Research Problem

The focus of this study is on the interaction between the churches, the media and the audience, before and while the message itself is being communicated. Even though the churches at large have adopted a range of forms of communication, including art and images, the emphasis is still on preaching and worship [Towne 1976; Searle 1981]. Bluck [1989:32] identifies homiletics as the most dominant type of Christian communication. Some practical theologians have studied different methods of preaching including interactive sermons [Rose 1997:61]. The churches' main interest is to develop various forms of preaching including an 'interactive sermon'. Bond [1991:5] defines an interactive sermon as, "any sermon that draws its text, and its interpretation of scripture from the relational experience between the story of the scripture and the life context of the listener". By emphasising the conventional forms (such as preaching and worship) the churches have often neglected other cultural forms even when they have used the media. This is particularly true with the churches in India and their media institutions.

The Christian media institutions in India (such as FEBA or TWR Radio Vishvawani) that work in association with the churches mainly proclaim the gospel through preaching and worship services [FEBC-web:1999]. However, the churches have also raised ethical issues about the impact of the media, and their effect on the

worldview and belief of their audiences. Recently the churches give less emphasis on the effect of the media on the audience but have expressed concern about the role of the media institutions in the social and cultural context of the audience. Churches give importance to these two approaches of media which are reflected in the WCC assemblies' reports and Pontifical documents. First the media are used by the churches to proclaim the gospel in the conventional forms. Secondly the churches have raised concern about the impact of the media on the audience's social and cultural life.

Even though recent documents (WCC Assembly and Pontifical) from the churches show a wider understanding of communication within the social and cultural context of the audience (both at local and global levels), these two approaches – proclamation of the gospel and concern for the effects of the media on the audience – are often discussed more than other approaches. The present churches' perspectives on communication and their theological bases have rarely emphasised the role of the audience in the construction of meanings of the gospel message. Even before the gospel message is communicated the audience shares certain social values and religious beliefs. In this study the communicator and the audience are seen as participants and learners in the process of constructing and sharing meanings of the gospel.

This study extends Kraft's definition of 'meaning'. He [1979:135] defines meaning as the structuring of information in the minds of persons. He sets context and message as the framework for developing meaning. I will use the word 'meaning' in its plural form in this study to highlight the multiple verbal meanings that might arise during the interaction between the communicator and the audience.

Meanings are in the minds of individuals and are shared by their community through communication¹. They can arise from or be mediated through, the content of the media. They can also be conditioned by the context of the audience or of the communicator. Some times these meanings help both individuals and the community to maintain their religious beliefs and social values. An effective communicator recognises some of these meanings that are familiar to his or her audiences and uses them in order to interact with them.

In this sense communication can be defined as a process in which meanings are shared, interpreted and constructed with or without the use of a medium. Christian communication is also a process in which meanings of the gospel are constructed, mediated and reinterpreted. Meanings of the gospel may not be effectively communicated without recognising the socio-cultural and religious meanings that the audience already shares among them. There is a need for the churches and their communicators to recognise the audiences' way of developing social values and their methods of sharing their belief in order to interact with them. This would lead to recognition of the role of the audience even before the gospel message is communicated to them.

Recent research in the field of communication has focused on the audience's role in the construction of meanings. While recognising some degree of reciprocity between encoding and decoding moments, Hall argues that decoding (of the communicator) and encoding (of the audiences) are not identical [1980:136]. He [1980:130] points out that before the message can have an 'effect', it must be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded. His approach recognises the role of the audiences before the message is constructed.

As this decoding and encoding occurs in a particular social and cultural context, meanings are constructed through various other processes besides the communication process. Jensen and Rosengren [1990:212] note that for cultural studies, the centre of communication research is located outside the media. For them the media are embedded, along with the audiences, in broad social and cultural practices. The communication process needs to be seen within the wider cultural and social context that the communicator and the audience share. McQuail [1983:87] classifies the approach as an 'interactive alternative' in which communication takes place within the social and cultural context, and the old forms of communication exist with the new media forms. In this approach meanings are mediated through a wide range of media and can arise from the context in which communication takes place. From such a perspective communication can best be understood as a cultural interaction between the communicator and the audience.

The present study attempts to highlight the importance of analysing communication as a cultural interaction within a community. The need for such a study arises from the very rapid increase in the use of new forms of media (e.g. Internet) and the interaction among them. Plude [1994,1999A] points out the interactive characteristics of media technology and its impact on the practices of communication. For her they present an inevitable challenge for the churches to rethink their passive perspectives and search for a participatory approach [Plude 1994:180&195]. She develops her interactive approach from looking at the technological impact on the communication pattern and organisational structures of society [1999A:5]. In the computer era these interactive patterns of communication

certainly emerge, but, without a theological perspective the churches will find it difficult to engage in such interaction.

Neuman [1991:105] proposes a similar approach which arises from technological interactivity. For him this produces a new grammar and cultural genre. Instead of studying the inevitable interactive patterns that technology presents to culture, it is necessary to look at how the cultural and religious patterns can make present and future communication interactive. By pointing out the dramatic changes television has caused in radio programming McLuhan [1993:54] notices an increasing interactivity among different types of media. These interactive characteristics mediate a wide range of meanings (social and religious) to the audience while also encouraging them to participate in their construction.

By recognising these technological and cultural developments, a Christian communicator² can become aware of the plurality of possible meanings and thus participate in the communication process in order to provide his or her own meanings of the gospel in the midst of other meanings. If the churches wish to communicate the meanings of the gospel, then they have to begin their communication from where the audiences are. By sharing the audience's belief and worldview and by taking part in their communication process, the Christian communicator may help them to interact with the meaning of the gospel.

If the churches and their media institutions consider this approach, they can effectively share and participate in the communication process of a wider audience. In this approach the churches are invited to present their meanings among the wide range of meanings that are available to the audience. The interaction among the churches, communication and culture does not always result in desired effect. Yet the

churches need to participate because this is one of the ways to engage in the audience's communication process and to interact with their belief and worldview. If the context demands such interaction, then the churches need to take immediate steps to become involved in the audience's communication process.

This interactive perspective is different from the dialogic approach that Dominic Emmanuel [1999], an Indian colleague, is trying to develop in his study of the Catholic churches' approach to communication. His main emphasis is on the inter-religious dialogue. His perspective on dialogue highlights the need for the broadcaster to consider each member of the audience as an equal, and to duly respect his/her opinion. He concludes that there is a need for a change in the broadcaster's attitude towards the audience who precedes the broadcaster in the dialogue [1999:170]. In contrast to this my study emphasises the need for the communicator to engage in the audience's process of communication. By sharing the audience's beliefs, their communicative forms³ and their worldview, the Christian communicator not only participates but also interacts with the audience. As participants together in the process, each learns from the other's experience of religion and culture. This cannot be achieved without a change in the perspective of the communicator towards the audience. It requires a reinterpretation of the theological basis which supports previous perspectives.

While interacting with the audience, Christian communicators are called to bear witness to the meanings of the gospel. Thus it is essential to present the meanings of the gospel message among a wide range of other meanings. In this sense the interactive approach broadens the dialogic approach by highlighting the roles of the communicator and the audience in the construction of meanings. By trying to

eliminate the gap between 'we' (the churches) and 'them' (the audience), this study shows up the need to recognise 'we' as part of the community which is shared by 'them'. It is argued that communication needs to be seen and studied within the social and cultural context in which the communicator and the audience live. In this sense interactive communication is more effective than dialogic communication.

As a postgraduate student of New Testament and of Mass Communication, I will attempt to address this challenge from an interdisciplinary perspective. In order to emphasise the importance of adopting this as a basis for the practice of Christian communication, this study will explore how Jesus used such methods of communication in his teachings. Through the analysis of one of his parables, I will show that this perspective is not a new method, rather that Jesus himself effectively interacted with his hearers by recognising their beliefs, worldview and forms of communication. This study proposes a number of hermeneutic principles in the New Testament field and also provides a theological basis for this perspective on communication. It aims to contribute to the work of Christian communicators and churches in their efforts to begin from the place where their audiences are and to share the gospel more effectively.

3. The Need for this Research in the Indian Context

The need for this study arises from my mission work and my experience of video ministry in the diocese of Tirunelveli (CSI). After my postgraduate studies, I was asked to go as a mission worker among the tea and rubber estate labourers in South India. During this time I came to know about a particular tribal people (Paliyars) in the forest near the estate (Western Ghats of Kerala)⁴. With the help of

local Christians I went to meet them and found them living in very poor conditions. Assisted by mainline churches from the diocese of Tirunelveli and through the Indian Missionary Society, we began to work among them⁵. At first I believed I had a lot to give to these people and that I would not receive much. I was soon to realise my error in a way that changed my whole approach to Christian communication.

During my work among the tribal people, I learnt about their way of understanding God and their method of communication. By sharing their beliefs and their forms of communication (story telling), I was able to communicate with them. By participating in their communication process, I began to realise wider meanings of the gospel while they also came closer to the gospel. The local churches together with Christians on the estates began to understand and meet their needs. A church was built for these tribal people. By the end of my term as a mission worker among the Paliyars, they had converted me with their enthusiasm for the gospel. In this interaction between the tribal people and myself, I began to realise the importance of beginning Christian communication from the place where the people were [Joshva 1999:15]. This region has become an official missionary field of the Indian Missionary Society in which fulltime missionaries are now working.

When I was helping the communication department of the Diocese of Tirunelveli to produce a few Christian video programmes, I attempted to introduce some of these principles into media practice. The churches in India are more interested in communicating the gospel through their regular forms of communication such as preaching and worship rather than in using any other local cultural forms such as video films or audiocassettes. While communicating the gospel using a medium (such as radio or television) the churches remain naive about

the context in which people in India live and are often ignorant of their cultural forms of communication. I began to realise the churches in India give less importance to a theological approach of interactive communication.

The necessity for this study also arises from recent issues in an Indian context. In the present situation where Hindus are increasingly becoming aware of their religion the propagation of the gospel is seen as an attempt to convert non-Christians to Christianity. Religious conversion is being seriously discussed both at political and cultural level [India Today web 1999:2]. Many people's lives are lost owing to the increase of religious fundamentalism and violence [Washington Post web 1999:1-2]. For example, one of the recent incidents in India, the Ram Janma Bhoomi – Babri Masjid issue (the destruction of a mosque⁶), led to large-scale violence between Hindu and Muslim communities in 1992 and afterwards [Mitra 1993]. This violence has become part of life wherever these two communities live beside each other. While the church (National Council of Churches in India and Catholic Church of India) officially condemned the demolition of the mosque, the Indian Christian community at large remained silent [Indian Express 1992:3]. For the most part the churches in India maintained a missionary attitude towards other religions, though there are some exceptions. Such an attitude is reflected in the churches' media institutions. While sharing the gospel with the audiences, many churches and their media institutions appeared to ignore their social context as well as vital cultural and political issues, particularly during this time of conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims.

It is very difficult for Christian media producers and directors to address these issues directly or to engage in the audience's communication process. The social and cultural context in India requires a reinterpretation of religious beliefs in terms of human relationship, and awareness of the destructive power of holding an exclusive religious or cultural worldview. On the one hand most Hindu audiences do not want to hear messages of conversion and on the other hand they want to find a way of living peacefully with Muslims. By helping the audience to live peacefully the Christian media may have a chance of presenting or witnessing to the gospel indirectly. The churches in India may have to develop an alternative perspective with which they can continue to interact beyond their religious boundaries. There is a clear need for Christian communicators to take part in the audience's search for religious and cultural meanings.

By reflecting on and addressing social issues, by sharing their beliefs and by using their forms of communication, the Christian communicator can effectively participate in their process of communication and present the meanings of the gospel indirectly to the audience. Referring to an example can demonstrate this. The best way to communicate is to use the forms of communication that the audience is accustomed to, which is mostly through a story (e.g. films and television drama) in order to engage in their search for meanings. The parabolic form is a relevant and indirect method of sharing the gospel with audiences in India in the present context. Such attempts both at local church level and at the mass level through the churches' media need to be seen as part of the mission and ministry of the church. It is essential that the churches recognise this as part of Christian communication even though this does not directly lead many towards conversion.

It is a challenge for Indian Christian theological students and for Christian media workers to enable the Indian audience to interpret their religious belief so that different religions can live together peacefully. This is one example from an Indian context which shows the relevance and importance of this study. In such a complex situation the best way is to engage with the audience in their search for meanings that are relevant to their context. The churches have to find a way to engage indirectly in the audience's communication process and this study aims to provide a theological basis for such an attempt. The main purpose of Christian communication is to share the meanings of the gospel with all the people by all possible media. If such an indirect method provides the best chance of sharing the meanings of the gospel in a particular context, it should be given a prominent place in Christian media practice.

My own experience showed that many of the Indian churches did not have an interest in developing proper policies and strategies of communication and above all did not emphasise the need for a strong theological basis for such a perspective. In order to enable the churches to give importance to this position, it is vital to provide them with a strong theological basis and to enable them to develop policies and strategies for their media practice by providing principles of Christian communication. Apart from the studies mentioned earlier (e.g. Emmanuel's study), there is insufficient research in Indian Christian theological circles into this issue of sharing, participating and interacting with the wider audience in order to establish peace and present the gospel through witnessing. My study points out how important it is that the church should recognise the role of the audience in Christian communication even before the gospel message is communicated. The churches are yet to give prominence to this aspect of communication as will be shown in the study

of the WCC's Assembly reports and Pontifical Documents in the next chapter.

4. Methodology

There are many interfaces between theology and communication. One is the public character of both. The main interface between them is the construction of meanings through story telling. Every medium deals with narrative forms. Owing to its cultural importance, the narrative characteristic of communication can effectively contribute to an interaction between the communicator and the audience. The parabolic form of communication is not only relevant to Christian communication but is also relevant to other forms of communication, because of its way of constructing and mediating meanings. Jesus' choice of the parable as a form of communication shows his interest in engaging in such interaction with his hearers and provides an important theological basis for Christian communication. In order to demonstrate the importance of interacting with the audience through parabolic forms, this study analyses the hermeneutic characteristics of the parables and their ways of presenting meanings.

This interdisciplinary study employs both New Testament and communication methodologies. It uses a qualitative and interpretative method to analyse the churches' documents and the gospel parables. In Chapter 2 the need for a theological basis is emphasised by analysing the World Council of Churches Assemblies' report and the Pontifical Commission's documents⁷. By bringing together Carey's cultural understanding of communication and Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication the theoretical perspective and its theological basis are identified. In Chapter 3 this theological basis is analysed with reference to

the context of Jesus' parables and their interpretations. By using socio-cultural and structural analysis, one of the parables of Jesus is studied within the wider context of Jewish teachings.

Chapter 4 brings together the theoretical perspective which is developed in Chapter 2 and principles of Jesus' parabolic communication that are identified in Chapter 3. In order to translate these principles into media practice, an attempt is made to analyse the 'Video Ministry' in the diocese of Tirunelveli⁸, Church of South India in Chapter 5. Two video films are used as case studies within the context of the wider communication process in South India. In the last sections of Chapter 5 some models of Christian communication that are relevant to the present Indian context are identified. The Conclusion demonstrates the relevance of this study to theological training in the subcontinent and to Indian Christian media practice.

Biblical references are taken from the Revised Standard Version (Computer) of the Bible. Reference is also made to Inter Testamental books, Philo, Josephus, Qumran texts and some of the Apocalyptic books to identify the possible beliefs, forms of communication and worldview of Jesus' hearers. In many cases the English translation of primary sources such as Philo, Josephus and rabbinical texts is adopted. From the analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan, certain principles of Christian communication will be developed. When referring to books the Harvard reference system is being used according to the guidance given by Kilian's *Form and Style in Theological Texts* [1989] and to the University of Edinburgh System.

5. Limitations

Even though this study attempts to show the importance of the interactive perspective on Christian communication and its relevance to Christian media practices, it avoids generalisation to other contexts. In India the contexts are changing rapidly and so some of the issues identified may not be relevant after a few years unless this approach is redefined. In the analysis of the parable, rabbinical references are used even though their dates are often very late and they cannot be identified as contemporary documents. The analysis of the two video-films is limited to the context of Tirunelveli. This is neither a content analysis nor an audience study but an attempt to identify the role of the people, including the communicator, in the construction of meanings about God and about life.

This study hopes to enable the churches and their communicators to participate in the communication process which the people in India share. It attempts to encourage the churches and their communicators to help their audience to establish a relationship with God and with their neighbours rather than to pass on doctrines and regulations to them. By engaging with the audience, the churches might share the gospel indirectly just as Jesus did with his hearers. This study attempts to present certain strategies and policies for Christian media practitioners and theologians which are relevant to the churches in South India. The alternative perspective in this study aims not to replace, but to strengthen and to widen the present perspectives (such as evangelistic communication) of the churches. Whatever the limitations may be, the present study highlights the way through which the churches in India can effectively interact with their Christian and non-Christian audiences by sharing their media and culture.

Chapter 2

The Interactive Perspective on Christian Communication

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to develop policies and strategies for the churches to interact with the mass media and the audience in order to share the gospel. The church and her communicators - Christian communicators - see their role in the interaction between the media⁹ and the audience essentially from two perspectives. After introducing these perspectives this chapter will analyse the World Council of Churches Assemblies' Reports, some of the Roman Catholic Pontifical documents on the 'Means of Social Communication' and some of the World Association for Christian Communication Congress' declarations. The primary task of the first part of this chapter is to show that some of the world bodies that represent the churches reflect these approaches in their reports on communication. These two perspectives are introduced and critically studied in order to highlight the importance of an interactive approach that is relevant to Christian communication today.

First, Christian communication involves sharing the gospel with people and enabling them to establish a relationship with God. It is to obey the commission that Jesus gave to his disciples to spread the gospel to 'all nations' (Mk.13:10). It is seen as the responsibility of all Christians to proclaim the message of the gospel to the entire world through all possible means of communication. Secondly the churches are concerned about the ethical issues that arise from the impact of the media on the people's beliefs and values. From an ethical perspective the mass media are often seen as powerful institutions that raise moral issues and sometimes present a

challenge to the basic principles of the gospel. On the one hand the churches attempt to challenge such effects of the media and on the other hand they try to make the audience aware of the ethical issues. Even though other views such as dialogic and cultural engagement also continue to influence the churches' attitude towards the media these two primary perspectives dominate most of the discussion in the WCC Assemblies' reports and in the Pontifical Commission Documents.

These approaches view the mass media either as instruments of communicating the gospel (instrumentalist perspective) or as powerful tools that can make a negative impact on the audience's values and beliefs (effect-centred perspective). By emphasising the instrumentalist approach the churches focus mainly on the role of the communicator, on the media as powerful instruments, on their content and on their reception. By emphasising the effect-centred approach, they highlight the effect that a medium, its content and its institutions, has on the audience. These two approaches of the churches are based on certain theological assumptions that are supported by the interpretation of the biblical narratives in which God is often seen as the primary source of communication.

Having received the revelation from God through Jesus, some churches claim to possess the gospel and see it as their duty to communicate it to others. In this concept of revelation the audiences are often seen as faithful receivers. This perspective on communication is given importance by some of the churches' documents, in their discussions about their mission through the media. However some of the recent WCC Assemblies' reports and Pontifical documents (such as *Communio et Progressio*) have attempted to depart radically from this perspective and have emphasised the dialogical aspect of communication. This can be difficult,

because the instrumentalist and effect-centred perspectives are often grounded in certain theological bases which will be identified in the following sections. For this reason many Christian communicators and the church documents tend not to describe the audience as active participants in the construction of meanings of the gospel. World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) has emphasised this participatory approach in their declarations and principles. This chapter will also analyse the participatory approach that is emphasised in the WACC's documents. Thus the first task of this chapter is to study whether some of the churches' documents give primary importance to the instrumentalist and effect-centred perspectives on communication in their reports.

Communicating the gospel does not occur in a vacuum. The churches need to recognise more clearly that Christian communication occurs only when audiences also participate in this process. Audiences are already engaged in various processes of communication through which a wide range of religious and social meanings are mediated and made available to them. This study emphasises the role of the audience both in sharing and constructing the meanings of the gospel. In order to present the gospel and its meanings to a wider audience the churches have to start the process from where the audiences are. This gives rise to the need for an 'alternative' perspective on communication that can help the churches to engage effectively with the audience using the media.

In order to develop this alternative perspective and a theological basis this chapter will focus on Carey's cultural definition of communication and Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication. Even though the churches' statements may not have a direct impact on media practices or reflect all the views of

the member churches, they are widely discussed and considered by many Christian media institutions while developing strategies and policies. By referring to the way in which Jesus interacted with his audience through parables, this study will emphasise the need for the churches to give priority to this perspective on communication.

2. The Documents of the Churches on Christian Communication

A. Introducing the Documents of the Churches

The reports of the WCC Assemblies and the Pontifical Commission of Social Communication's pastoral instructions have been selected because these institutions, and their statements, reflect the opinion of the majority of the members or representatives attending the respective assemblies from all over the world. This study also includes WACC Congress declarations in order to show that a few institutions have already begun to give importance to the participatory approach to communication. Their reports have also been sent to their respective member churches for consideration. The Catholic Church reports are included in this research, because in India, Christian communicators from different denominations, including the Catholic Church try to work together in media institutions, all representing minority religious communities.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is an ecumenical Christian organisation representing 336 churches and denominations from 120 countries. Every seven years, the WCC convenes an International Assembly calling together representatives from its member-churches. The assembled delegates set policies for the Council's work and make statements regarding the churches' roles in various aspects of contemporary society. WCC assemblies began making statements about the interaction between the church and the media in 1961 when the Third Assembly

was held in New Delhi. In this chapter particular reference will be made to the statements of the WCC Assemblies in Uppsala (1968) and in Vancouver (1983) on the media such as *The Church and the Media of Mass Communication* [Goodall 1968: 389-401] and *Communicating Credibly* [Gill 1983:103-110]. These statements were adopted by the Council and were recommended to the churches for study and appropriate action [Goodall 1968:267; Gill 1983:103].

The Catholic Church has made statements on the media either through encyclical letters or through Vatican Council decrees. Eilers [1993:5] points out that some of these texts have a normative character and are considered as the basic teaching of the church on social communication. Reference will be made to Eilers' collection and Internet version of the basic documents of the Papal encyclical letter and Pontifical Commission's reports on the means of social communication, particularly to *Inter Mirifica* (1963), *Communio et Progressio* (1971) and *Aetatis Novae* (1992). These statements are considered to be more positive statements about communication than the earlier Pontifical Decrees [Soukup 1996:ix]. For example, the earlier documents such as *Vigilanti Cura* (1936) asked the Bishops and the entire Catholic world to put a ban on bad motion pictures [Eilers 1993:16]. The recent documents attempted to understand the role of the media in society from a broader perspective (such as dialogical perspective in *Communio et progressio -115*). My study will also refer to the annual Papal messages on the World Communication Day every year since 1967 when they began. Hamelink [1975] and other contemporary scholars have studied some of these documents. I refer to them in the critical analysis of these documents.

Some of the churches' documents did not escape criticism from members of the Assemblies or from some of the representative members of the churches. In the Vancouver WCC Assembly the document on the media was thought to be too negative in its assessment of the potentiality of the media by one of the representatives of the churches from Germany [Gill 1983:103]. And at the Vatican Council, before the final vote on *Inter Mirifica* by the members of the Pontifical Commission, a group of American Catholic scholars issued a statement against the decree which received support from three Council theologians. These statements reflect the views of the majority of the members of the councils or assemblies. The following sections will give a brief introduction to the church documents.

This study also recognises the importance of a few international institutions such as the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) which try to contribute to the wider Christian communities. WACC has its general secretariat in London, UK, and has eight regional associations in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America and the Pacific. WACC has more than 800 corporate and personal members in 115 countries worldwide [WACC Web 2000].

WACC is an international, ecumenical organisation established by Christian communicators¹⁰ whose aim is to prioritise Christian values in the world's communication and development needs. Its main focus is on empowering people and promoting democratic structures of communication¹¹. It organises various programmes at international and regional levels particularly conferences, and makes statements regarding communication for discussion by churches around the world. I

will analyse the declarations of the WACC congress and some other conferences that give importance to participatory communication.

B. WCC Documents

From the time of the third WCC Assembly in New Delhi (1961), statements were prepared regarding communication and the mass media. In the New Delhi report there was an attempt to define Christian communication and to see the role of the mass media in it. It states, "To communicate the Gospel involves the willingness and the ability of the evangelist to identify himself with those whom he addresses" [Hooft 1962:82]. This statement clearly indicates the need for the communicator to share the concerns of youth, workers and intellectuals, to sympathise with their aspirations and to learn their language. When this report speaks of the mass media, it referred to radio, television and the press. It recognised the importance of using them as instruments of communication [Hooft 1962:84].

In Uppsala (1968), a special report was presented to the assembly in which the function, use and effect of the media were discussed. The term media included films, communication satellites, records and magnetic tapes besides television and radio [Goodall 1968:389]. The whole of the text can be summarised in one sentence: "the mass media can be employed for either powerful communication or deceitful manipulation" [Goodall 1968:30]. Even though the positive function of the media was recognised, the report pointed to the economic aspect of their institutions. It questioned the credibility of those who owned the media institutions primarily for commercial gain. The report recognised the impact of the media on Christians and on their faith [Goodall 1968:394-5]. It asked the churches to consider not only the use

but also the structure and function of the media, and to become fully involved with them. The report went beyond the use of the media to express concern over their social functions and their effect on the audience. It also emphasised the need to explore the theological aspects of communication.

At the fifth WCC Assembly in Nairobi (1975) there was no separate report on media or communication. There was a brief statement about the media with the emphasis on traditional methods of communication, such as the living witness in words and deeds of Christian persons, groups and congregations [Paton 1975:54]. In the sixth WCC Assembly in Vancouver (1983) a special section was included in the report under the title *Communicating Credibly*. As in Uppsala, the function and use of the media at global and local level were discussed. The report questioned the credibility of the media¹².

The Vancouver report recommended to the churches three possible ways of using the media: pastoral, evangelical and prophetic. It called on the churches to understand the tensions of those who work in the media pastorally; to use media; and to provide critique of performance, content, and techniques of the mass media. The report also encouraged the churches to use alternative forms of communication [Gill 1983:107-9]. The group that prepared this section supported the demand for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The report defined the word 'communication' as a process which involves several persons in active sharing, interacting and participating [Gill 1983:103n]. This cultural perspective is similar to that which is developed in this study. By studying the media's role within the wider social and cultural processes and by highlighting the audience's role in the construction of meanings, this study attempts to widen the cultural perspective into

an effective alternative vision. In the Vancouver Assembly the media were called to serve the people by using new possibilities for individual feedback and group participation [Gill 1983:106]. For the first time in this report the churches were called to provide credible information through alternative forms.

In the seventh WCC Assembly (Canberra, 1991) there was no special report on the media or on communication apart from a number of references. This report called for co-operation with the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) in this area [Kinnamon 1991:50]. Churches should express their opposition to the distortion of truth by the media, and also ask individuals who work in communication to exercise Christian witness in the work place. The churches are encouraged to communicate in the cause of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. But there is silence about communication of the gospel using the media. Instead the churches are called to communicate the truth with love and listen [Kinnamon 1991:247].

In the report of the eighth WCC Assembly in Harare (1998) there are a few statements about the role of the media at global and national level¹³. In this report there is an explicit attack on the developed countries for their effort to gain and secure military and political hegemony on a global scale. Global media networks are said to promote a consumerist mono-culture [WCC web 1999:36]. The Harare reports view the media as powerful instruments that lead to the control of one group over the other. The media are blamed for many of the problems at global and local levels. The churches are called to speak for the voiceless and oppose those hegemonising forces of nations or individuals. In this report also there is no mention of the use of the media in the mission of the church. They clearly present the view of

the churches towards the media and the possible response of the churches. Before critically analysing different perspectives that are reflected in these documents, my study identifies Pontifical Commission's statements on Communication.

C.WACC Documents

WACC was formed following the merger of the World Association for Christian Broadcasting (WCCB) and the Coordinating Committee for Christian Broadcasting in Oslo in 1968. WACC began to make policy statements from 1986 onwards with the adoption of its *Christian Principles of Communication*. These principles recognise the way in which the mass media affect people's lives. But communication is also defined as participatory and as a two-way interactive process [WACC 1997:7]. While pointing out the problems of the existing structure of the mass media, they recognise the participatory, liberating and prophetic characteristics of communication. These principles demonstrate that WACC is also interested in encouraging communicators to engage in people's communication process [WACC 1997:5-9].

WACC organised its first international Congress in Manila in 1989. People from diverse fields of communication were represented at the congress. They shared some concerns which were later issued as the Manila Declaration. In this congress they discussed the theme 'Communication for Community' and adopted the Macbride Report under the title *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New more Just and more Efficient World Information and Communication Order* (NWICO) [WACC 1997:10]. In this declaration the members also recognised the link between culture, the media and the ecological system, and also between communication and power. They emphasised the responsibility of communication workers to advocate high

professional standards in their practices. They recommended WACC to widen its network, to bring awareness of the NWICO debate, to provide opportunities between traditional communication and alternative media, to strengthen its programmes in media education, to enable church-related institutions to develop communication policies and to bring about the empowerment of women.

Their second Congress was held in Mexico in 1995 and was attended by many delegates from around the world. The theme was *Communication for Human Dignity* from a local and global perspective. There was a call to recognise the wider role of the communicator in strengthening various indigenous cultural and life-enhancing forms of communication and to challenge power structures within the media. The participants reflected on many issues that affect communication, and recommended certain principles that would enable communicators to become more effective: to use the media in innovative and responsible ways, to undertake serious theological reflection on their work and mission, and to affirm deep-rooted human values and plural expressions as well as social contradictions. They urged communicators to identify and to understand the interactive nature of new communication technology and to use it to achieve more freedom, fairness and diversity in the media [WACC 1997:22].

These two declarations will be analysed together with other manifestos when considering the participatory approach of communication. WACC has certainly attempted to give importance to this approach. Their declarations reflect a realistic attitude towards the media practitioners and a wider understanding of the role of the media in society. WACC declarations are often discussed in the churches' journals [Suk 1986:12].

D. Catholic Documents

The first encyclical letter of a Pope on the means of communication in the 20th century is *Vigilanti Cura* (1936). It focused on the effects and the power of 'motion pictures'. It encouraged the churches and their members to assess critically motion pictures and promote good films [Eilers 1993:8-20]. The second encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII on Motion pictures, Radio and Television is *Miranda Prorsus* (1957). The media are seen as gifts of God, and their use, function and effects are discussed in this letter. This letter recognises the importance of keeping in touch with the professionals such as critics, actors and producers. It draws attention to the duties of audiences' and to the responsibility of the church in promoting God's word to the audience [Eilers 1993:47].

The Vatican Council discussed the issue of the media and issued a decree (*Inter Mirifica*, 1963). Eilers [1993:59] notes a shift in understanding whereby communication is not restricted to mere technical means of transmission but rather is concerned about communication as a process between and among human beings. In the document a need for training priests, lay people, journalists, actors and the audience in this field is emphasised. The primary approach is not to use the media for the churches' purpose but also to encourage the media to be responsible and to have programmes of reasonable quality [Eilers 1993:61-7]. Many positive aspects of the media are highlighted in this document even though many individual members of the Council felt that this document presented a negative approach towards the media. The 503 No-votes against 1598 Yes-votes clearly show that a number of Council members were not satisfied with this document [Eilers 1993:57].

The Pontifical Commission on Social Communication proposed another document (*Communio et Progressio*, 1971) as pastoral instruction on the means of social communication. This was neither a decree approved by a Council of Bishops nor an encyclical letter of the Pope but was signed by the president of the commission and approved by the Pope. It was a statement with the most positive, professional and concrete approach to communication and church [Eilers 1993:71]. For the first time the theological foundations of communication were discussed in this document. It recognised the positive roles of the media in human progress and the need for training personnel. The report emphasised the use of the media in promoting a dialogue within the church and between the church and the world¹⁴. The contributions of Catholics to the media and of the media to Catholics were the main foci of the report. There was a reiteration of the use of the media to proclaim the gospel to the audience. My study agrees with Eilers that this document has certainly provided the best theological basis to engage in a wider dialogue with the media.

After twenty years the Pontifical Council presented another pastoral instruction (*Aetatis Novae*, 1992) which was signed by its president and did not carry a note of approval by the Pope [Eilers 1993:120]. *Aetatis Novae* contains many quotes from earlier statements. The role of media was seen in a wider cultural, political, economic and social context but from a broader ethical perspective. There was a call for a critical approach towards the structure and policies of the media institutions and practices and for a right to communicate. The instruction emphasises began to recognise the importance of a holistic approach towards communication and media practice. There is a shift in priority from defending a moral stand to protecting human cultures.

These documents (both WCC and Pontifical) focus their discussions mostly on two major perspectives of communication. The more recent documents in particular began to show a sympathetic attitude towards media practitioners and to identify a need for participatory communication. The effort with which the perspectives of communication in these documents are developed should be appreciated. Their anticipation of a wider debate on the role of the media needs to be recognised. Having given an outline of these reports, the following section will highlight the two major perspectives in them.

3. The Approaches of the Churches

Even though a development in the understanding of communication can be clearly identified in these documents two primary approaches are inherent in them. In the first approach, the task is to use the media to communicate the gospel to all. The media serves as an instrument for extending the traditional methods of communication such as preaching and worshipping. In the second approach the aim is to address the ethical issues that arise from the influence of the media on the audience.

A. Instrumental Approach

In this approach the media are seen primarily as instruments to communicate the gospel. The media have an instrumental role. Christian communicators are expected to use the media to produce, distribute and broadcast the gospel message to all people. The media are instruments to extend the sphere of influence from the

pulpit of the local congregation to a wider audience. The reports and statements of two international ecumenical institutions are selected in order to show that their views mostly reflect this approach when discussing the communication of the gospel. Even though all the member churches do not necessarily share these views their reports are sent for consideration to all the member churches.

i. Statements

Some of the reports of the WCC Assemblies and the Pontifical Commissions use the word 'instrument or means' to refer to the media or other technology that facilitates communication. The WCC (New Delhi) Assembly's Reports it says, "Religious broadcasting and television are still only beginning to explore the possibilities of these new instruments of communication" [Hooft 1962:84]. This report reflects the concern of WCC Assembly members by noting that, "Broadcasting is an effective means of evangelism and education, especially if attention is given to securing a response from the audience" [Hooft 1962:311].

In the Uppsala report [1968] the churches were asked to abandon their traditional suspicion of the media. The report acknowledges the fact that the mass media have acquired a prominent place in all societies and also have an influence on the church [Goodall 1968:389]. The report has developed a triangular understanding of the use, function and the structure of the media. It states:

In the light of this (mission) the media can be seen as potential tools of mission. They must be used properly, stressing the need for good quality performance, a language understood by all, and respect for people of other faiths or no faith [Goodall 1968:397].

In this document the media are seen as potential tools of mission to communicate the gospel to all people. There is a demand to improve the quality of Christian communication by using honest techniques and by maintaining a 'high view of the nature of man'. In the Nairobi WCC Assembly, the churches were encouraged to use every possible means of communication in order to share the gospel with all people [Paton 1976:54]. From 1983 onwards the WCC Assemblies' reports began to take a realistic look at the interaction between the church and the media. There was a call for the churches to communicate credibly and to experiment with alternative forms of communication. In the Vancouver Assembly it states:

Evangelically, the churches must resist the temptation to use the media in ways which violate people's dignity and manipulate them, but rather (the church) should proclaim with humility and conviction the truth entrusted to it [Gill 1983:107].

These documents invite the churches to use the media for their purpose of communicating the gospel. They view the media as a powerful instrument of communication that could be used by the church to share the gospel with all people.

Catholic encyclical letters and Vatican Council Decrees express similar views. In one of the encyclical letters (*Miranda Prorsus*, 1957), it states, "From the art and letters of antiquity down to the technology of our day all the means by which men are united with one another have tended to this high end, that is this task men might in some way be ministers of God" [Web Edition 1999:3]. The Vatican Council Decree (*Inter Mirifica*, 1963) identifies the press, the cinema, radio, television and others of a like nature as 'the means of social communication' [Eilers 1993:61]. The decree calls on pastors to employ these means in preaching the gospel; to aim for

technical perfection and for general effectiveness in conveying religious truths [Eilers 1993:64-5].

In 1971, the Pontifical Commission passed a pastoral instruction (*Communio et Progressio*) regarding social communication which indicated a broader role for the media - extending beyond worship. It states, "The modern media offer new ways of confronting people with the message of the Gospel, of allowing Christians even when they are far away to share in sacred rites and worship and in ecclesiastical functions" [Eilers 1993:103]. This is restated in the recent document of the Pontifical Commission of Social Communication (*Aetatis Novae*, 1992). It calls on the church to use the media in evangelisation and catechesis along with more traditional liturgical expressions [Eilers 1993:129].

One of the major tasks of Christian communication as reflected in these documents is to use the media to communicate the gospel. As the media are seen as instruments of communication, the churches are expected to produce the message to send through these instruments to the audience. Whenever these reports speak about the use of the media in communicating the gospel the Christian communicators are asked to view them as powerful instruments through which to extend their sphere of influence.

'The Role of the Communicator and the Audience'

The churches and their members are expected to play the role of communicator in sharing the gospel while using the media. The report recommends the churches to use the media as instruments of communicating the gospel in order to secure a response from the audience [Hooft 1962:311]. Except for the New Delhi

report¹⁵, other WCC Assemblies' reports are silent about the audience while discussing the communication of the gospel. In order to improve the use of the media, the WCC Assembly's report in Uppsala wants the churches to train their communicators with a high degree of professional skill [Goodall 1968:401]. It calls on them to use a language understood by all and to have respect for people of other faiths or none.

The primary emphases of these documents are on developing the quality of the media techniques and the contents. The Nairobi WCC Assembly's report (1975) invites the churches to use all the means of communication with a humble spirit of sensitivity and participation [Paton 1976:55]. It recognised the need for participation on the part of the communicator. A similar emphasis on the role of communicator can be noted in the reports of WCC Assemblies in Vancouver (1983) and in Canberra (1991).

The idea of the communicator as a sender of the message of the gospel can be traced in Catholic documents too. In *Miranda Prorsus* (1957), Catholics are advised to use the technical methods of communication to spread the teaching of God and of his son, Jesus Christ [Eilers 1993:33]. Having received this teaching of Jesus, Catholics are directed to use the media to convey the message. In *Communio et Progressio* the role of the communicator is to employ all the opportunities offered by the modern media to extend the message of the gospel to a growing number of people [Eilers 1993:103]. Both the WCC Assemblies' reports and the Catholic documents reflect the instrumentalist approach while expressing their views about the use of the media in the proclamation of the gospel. The next section will highlight how this perspective was developed from certain theological concepts in the churches'

documents.

ii. Underlying Beliefs

The instrumentalist perspective on communication has been developed from a few Christian theological concepts in which the role of the churches is to communicate the gospel to the audience so that they might receive and believe in it. The WCC assemblies' documents reflect the theological perspectives on which this approach to communication is based. In the WCC Uppsala (1968) report states:

Communication is also the way in which God makes himself known to man, and man responds to God. God speaks, the church proclaims; our doctrinal shorthand sees active and creative communication as the source and motivating source of all life. In Jesus Christ God revealed himself to man and made communion with him possible. The (this) message must be preached and enacted in all its breadth and depth, in its relevance to modern man [Goodall 1968:394-5].

According to this statement the role of God in this theological understanding of communication is to make himself known to people. The content of Christian communication is the information about Jesus. This sets the theological framework for the understanding of communication in which the churches are called to send the message to all people. It was restated at the Vancouver Assembly¹⁶ in 1983. In this sense the churches are called to use the media speak about God in the way they received God's message through Jesus. This view of Christian communication is strongly developed and built on certain theological notions in WCC assemblies' reports.

The decrees of the Pontifical Commission for the means of Social Communication reflect similar theological concepts of communication. In 1971 *Communio et Progressio* states:

In the fullness of time, he (God) communicated his very self to man and “the Word was made flesh”. ... While he was on earth, Christ revealed himself as the perfect communicator. ... He preached the divine without fear of compromise [Eilers 1993:76].

This document also states:

Christ commanded the apostles and their successors ‘to teach all nations’ to be ‘the light of the world’ and to announce the Good news in all places at all times. ... Therefore, the Second Vatican Council invited the People of God “to use effectively and at once the means of social communication, Zealously availing themselves of them for apostolic purposes” [Eilers 1993:103].

From this statement the second theological concept can be derived. It views Jesus as the perfect communicator who alone possessed the truth and communicated it to the church. The church was commanded to communicate this truth to all nations. Because Jesus was seen as a perfect communicator, his teachings should be considered as the perfect form of communication.

A similar statement was made in the Uppsala report (1968), “The Gospel is by nature a ‘scandalous story’, a stumbling block and an offence. We cannot change that; but the true scandal does not need to be confused with a scandalous presentation” [Goodall 1968:397]. While communicating this message the churches should not distort the content of the message in order to suit the medium of the people or to capture their attention. This perspective is further developed in 1992 in the Pontifical Council’s document *Aetatis Novae*, “Here in the word made flesh, God’s self-communication is definitive. ... Christ is both the content and dynamic source of the Churches’ communication in proclaiming the gospel” [Eilers 1993:126-]

7]. The report continues to state, “It (Christian communication) is the proclamation of the gospel as a prophetic, liberating word to the men and women of our times; it is testimony, in the face of radical secularization” [Eilers 1993: 129]. This approach to Christian communication is based on a theological concept whereby Jesus’ teachings and life form the content and the source of information while people are receivers. In this instrumentalist perspective God is assumed to be a perfect communicator and the Incarnation of Jesus provides the basis of perfect communication between God and humans. In a similar way the Church and the Christian communicators are seen as the senders and the audiences are the receivers.

The churches are called to use the media in order to communicate the Christian faith and values and to encourage their members to engage actively in any possible medium. The churches need to transmit the gospel without any distortion in its content. Because of the support for such a theological concept this model dominates Christian communication in general. My contention is that the instrumentalist perspective on communication and its theological basis, are given more importance in these documents than the cultural perspective which is also recognised by them. In order to identify the need for a theological paradigm, this study will critically examine the problems of the instrumentalist approach and its theological basis.

iii. Critique

WCC assemblies’ reports and Pontifical Commissions’ decrees primarily reflect an instrumentalist approach while encouraging their churches to use the media in mission and evangelism. In these documents the instrumentalist perspective is

related to a theological framework in which God is seen as the primary source of communication and the people are seen as receivers of their message - that is the gospel. The audiences are seen as active participants only after the message is being communicated and their contribution is mostly seen as receivers. Their role in the construction of meanings before the gospel message is being communicated is given less importance. The task of this section is to critically analyse the theological basis on which this instrumentalist approach is developed and thus to challenge the approach and its practice.

Three major problems of this instrumentalist approach will be pointed out in order to identify the need for an alternative approach. The first problem is that Christian communication is seen as an equivalent of passing on information about Jesus to the audience. This approach is built on a theological assumption that Jesus is seen as a primary source of information and thus plays the role of a sender in Christian communication.

Having received their message from Jesus, the churches are called to proclaim the gospel to their audience. Thus the churches and their communicators are seen as senders of the gospel to the audience who actively receive it. This is particularly true when these documents speak about communicating the gospel. They highlight some important characteristics of the communication process such as producing high quality content, training of communicators, using quality technology and broadcasting through effective transmitters. These documents do not realise the importance of the ongoing search for meanings in which the audiences are already engaged even before the gospel is communicated. It is vital to recognise the audience's role in the construction of meanings of the gospel. Both communicator

and audience are equal participants in the search for meanings of the gospel and its relevance to their respective context.

Communicating the gospel is not like a package to be possessed by the churches or by Christian communicators. Rahner [1961] points out that revelation consists of more than propositional knowledge. He maintains that a proposition already implies a communication which has an over-abundance of information. The concept of God's revelation should not be separated from the relationship-establishing dialogue initiated by God. Because communicating the gospel cannot be considered merely as information or as propositional knowledge it is neither the equivalent of news about the churches and their doctrines. Babin also points out that:

The message of faith is not first and foremost information affecting my understanding. It is the effect produced in me by the whole complex known as the medium. The content of the faith message is not primarily the ideas or the teaching, but rather the listeners themselves insofar as they are affected by the medium [Babin 1991:6-7].

Babin criticises the process of treating Christian communication as an equivalent of information about God or Jesus or about Christian religion. He highlights the complexity in the interaction between the message and the people who share this message. Communicating the gospel through the media cannot simply be considered an act of informing people about Jesus. If the primary purpose of communicating the gospel is to establish or re-establish the relationship between God and humans and between human, then information about God alone may not be sufficient. If this information damages the relationship itself, then Christian communicators should find alternative approaches to communicate the gospel.

The second problem with this approach is that the media are seen merely as instruments. They are seen as useful means to carry the gospel message from a

communicator to an audience. The church often uses them to extend her sphere of influence. By giving importance to the instrumentalist's view the media are placed between the Christian communicator and the audience. Having studied some of these documents Hamelink [1975] was critical of the churches' use of the media as extensions for the purpose of convincing an audience to accept their doctrines. While they may be critical of the media for their cultural-ideological invasion, the churches nevertheless use them to extend their message to influence a wider public. Hamelink is right to argue that this approach is anti-dialogical. For him this view excludes the common discovery of what is true and avoids critical questioning of the content of the message [Hamelink 1975:28]. Jeyaweera [1978:3] notes that in India alone 28 Christian groups are broadcasting the Gospel message daily from Ceylon, the Seychelles and the Philippines. He states:

Christian communicators have all too often succeeded only in concealing the Gospel and generating prejudices towards images that are really only caricatures of the Gospel but in the minds of the local groups are mistaken for the true Gospel [Jeyaweera 1978:4].

The instrumentalist approach separates the communicator from the audience and thus may not reach out to the masses with the message of the gospel. By investing in production, training and broadcasting the churches attempt to communicate the gospel to the mass audience. The report of the WCC Assembly in New Delhi (1961) states, "It is Christ, not Christianity, that is to be proclaimed as the truth, as it is God's power and not ours which brings men to accept it" [Hooft 1962:83-84]. The claim that Jesus is the life of the world and is to be proclaimed as the truth may not make sense if communication is aimed at a non-Christian audience. By emphasising the gospel as truth, these documents note that Jesus is both content and source of

Christian communication. It can be understood as a message-centred interpretation of the gospel not of the people-centred interpretation.

The gospel presents this belief in story form that mediates the meanings of Jesus' teachings within his hearers' context. For the gospel writers the best way of communicating the gospel is to write in narrative form that would enable the audience to believe that Jesus is the Christ (Jn 20:31). They express their own personal belief in Jesus through their writings. In a similar way the media, their content and their forms interpret this belief that Jesus is the truth. McLuhan [1994:15] points out that the medium shapes the message and states: "any medium has the power of imposing its own assumption on the unwary". Technology enables to a particular way of interpreting belief. For example visual technology interprets one's beliefs through visual images.

The use of technology (computer), images (judge) and genres (television series)¹⁷ provide a framework of hermeneutic that has not been recognised by some of these documents. The word 'genre' is used in this study to denote types or classes of literature, for example, epic, tragedy and comedy [Abrams 1999:108]. In the parables it refers to different styles such as, proverb and stories. Ferreras-Oleffes [1978:244] argues that the new media are not merely vehicles (magnifying mirror) but new interpretations of human beings. These interpretations depend upon the number of variables in the media's role (such as media-technology and selection of a channel) in communicating the gospel. The word 'variable' means those characteristics with which any process can be varied or analysed. For example, in relation to the audience one variable might be their age group. By recognising the variables, the Christian communicator would try to engage in the audience's process

of communication with the gospel story rather than with mere information about the gospel.

The interaction between the gospel and the media has many variables which are not recognised by the instrumentalist approach of the churches' documents. This is because the role of the media cannot be seen without its place in a society [Ferrerias-Oleffes 1978:235]. Hamelink [1975:17-24] after studying the three church documents *Inter Mirifica*, *Communio et Progressio* and the Uppsala report argues that these documents encourage the churches to use the media, to motivate the audience with their theological concepts and thus to achieve certain effects. He notes that these reports do not take serious account of the long-range socio-cultural effect of the media in terms of their contribution to the whole process of cultural socialisation [1975:28]. The link between the media and the complex nature of the socio-cultural context has not been taken seriously during discussions about the communication of the gospel.

Media institutions are cultural institutions through which particular communities or people interact among themselves. In order to interact effectively with the audiences, communicators reflect and address the worldview and beliefs and use the forms and genres that are known and shared by them. By realising this link between the media and socio-cultural realities, churches can make use of their hermeneutic role in communicating the gospel. The media can certainly interpret the gospel in terms of the available genre, forms and meanings that are known to the audience. The use of the media in public communication has established certain ritual practices such as the camera view from a certain angle or a particular background or genre. If the gospel is to be communicated to the wider audience, then it may have to

meet the demands of the media and their forms. The audiences sharing different kinds of media have engaged in a communication process which provides part of the context for new media interaction. Christian communicators have to participate in this process in order to share the gospel. The instrumentalist approach ignores these variables in the interaction between the media and the gospel.

The third problem is that audiences as receivers of the gospel message are given more importance than other perspectives. By noting a similar model (sender-message-channel-receiver {SMCR}) Weber [1992] argues that it devalues persons in favour of the message. For him this approach (SMCR) emphasises the authority of the sender and the powerlessness of the receiver [1992:22]. In reality the audience interacts with the media and their content. In their interaction the audience interprets the meanings that arise from the media. This interaction does not begin simply after the message is sent through the media, but even as the message is produced. Christian communicators have to become aware of their audiences' role in the construction of meanings of the gospel message. Nevertheless the reports from the churches recognise this as an issue in discussions about the gospel and the media¹⁸. Because the churches assume that they possess the gospel there is little regard for the audiences' beliefs and their worldview.

These three problems cannot be addressed without assessing the theological paradigm on which this approach is developed. The present theological paradigm of the churches can be challenged by Jesus' portrayal in the gospels as a participant in his hearers' communication which this study attempts to do by analysing one of his parables. Christian communication is not merely concerned with the communication of the gospel, but also with the interaction between the communicator and the

audience. The role of the audience, even before the message is being communicated, should be given importance in Christian communication. The churches can engage in the audience's search for social and religious meanings and present the meanings of the gospel among the wide range of meanings by interacting with them. The next section will highlight the second approach in which the churches' reports focus on the effect of the media on the audience.

B. Effect-centred Approach

The second approach in the churches' documents reflects their desire to address the ethical issues raised by the effect of the mass media. In this approach there is an assumption that the media are very powerful in reaching the masses with their values. For example, they are concerned about the impact of violence and sex on the audience particularly on children. Through media education and by their own use of the media the WCC Assemblies' reports and Pontifical instructions hope to make both communicators and audiences aware of such ethical issues and to bring them to the attention of the public. In this effect centred approach, the churches try to express their concerns about the media and the need to influence them by introducing Christian values.

i. Statements

Some of these documents have been influenced by the assumption that the media such as television, radio and Internet have acquired a prominent place in society and have a big impact on people's lives. In the Uppsala report, it is noted that the media should be evaluated in terms of their social functions. While recognising

the positive role in helping the public to understand and to appraise the issues that affect them the report also highlights how the media can be perverted by powerful elite. By denying access to the people and by contributing to the dissatisfaction of the poor, the media can have an important effect on their lives [Goodall 1968:391]. The report understands the churches' voice can speak as one among many and realises that the media replace a single system of values with a plural system. The media's effect on the church and on Christians is noted even though the inherent claim of authenticity of their message is upheld [Goodall 1968:393].

In the Vancouver Assembly the media's impact on people's lives and values were developed further. The report in this assembly highlights the problems of the media at both local and global level. It states:

They (most ordinary men and women) have accepted the fact that only those with political and economic power, or those who possess professional skills, have the right to disseminate information, ideas, images and experiences. ... The mass media in many affluent countries distort and diminish the life of the world by packaging it as entertainment or simply as propaganda. ... In many countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific, the new media scarcely exist and are not likely to reach the people in the near future [Gill 1983:105].

The flow of communication from the few to the many, along with the control of the media, is questioned particularly when they are misused. Interestingly the report recommends that media systems need to become decentralised, community-based, and localised. It asks the churches to analyse critically the intention, content, style, and value reversal of the media and to experiment with alternative forms of communication.

In the Canberra Assembly (1991), the focus was more on the social role of the media and its effects on the people. Its report uses the instrumentalist image to show the effect on the audience by noting:

Means of communication are powerful tools of hidden control. Often, as in the present military situation in the Gulf, governments, even the governments of Northern democracies, control what the media can communicate. The truth is not told and we cannot exercise free judgement. ...The mass media are a means of cultural imperialism ..[Kinnamon 1991:83].

The media are seen as powerful instruments of a few powerful people who at times can manipulate them to achieve their own ends. The values portrayed by the media frequently stand against the Christian values. This report invites the churches to monitor the influence of the media and to express vigorously their opposition to the distortion of the truth, to negative stereotypes and to violent behaviour. The Harare Assembly's statement (1998) views the contemporary mass media as technological systems that promotes consumerist values and widens the gap between rich and poor, powerful and powerless [WCC Web 1999: 25].

Corresponding views and discussions can be found in the Pontifical Commission on social communication. The development of their views on ethical issues is demonstrated by comparing the encyclical letter *Miranda Prorsus* (1957), the Pontifical decree, *Inter Mirifica* (1963), and the pastoral instructions *Communio et Progressio* (1971), and *Aetatis Novae* (1992). These documents show that there is a development in the understanding of the church towards the media and their effect on the audience. There is a clear shift from the 'moral scare' to a realistic appraisal of the media effects in these documents. *Inter Mirifica* (1963) states, "all must accept the absolute primacy of the objective moral order. It alone is superior to and is capable of harmonising all forms of human activity, not excepting art, no matter how

noble in themselves” [Web edition 1963:2]. It is further noted in this decree that those who exploit the media solely for profit might hinder the communication of what is good and facilitate the communication of what is evil. The decree argues that the media can make a powerful impact on the audience in opposition to Christian ethical values [Eilers 1993:66-7].

In the pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971) the attitude towards the impact of the media on the people is presented in refined statements. This document realises that the media reflects the violence and savagery that occurs in societies. According to this statement if these events are shown too realistically they can pervert the image of human life and may show violence as an accepted way of resolving conflicts [Eilers 1993:84]. In the next document there is a call to take a positive and sympathetic approach to the media. *Aetatis Novae* (1992) identifies certain problems that arise from media policies and structures. They are: the unjust exclusion of some groups and classes from access to the means of communications, the systematic abridgement of the fundamental right to information which is practised in some places and the widespread domination of the media by economic, social and political elites. Catholics are asked not to dictate their values but rather to seek to be of help by stressing ethical and moral criteria - criteria which are to be found in both human and Christian values [Eilers 1993:130].

These statements clearly highlight many different views towards the ethical issues that arise from the impact of the media on the audience. Two primary ethical issues are identified: the influence of some of the media raises ethical concern for the churches; the way in which the media industries function at global and local levels is frequently in opposition to Christian principles. In order to address these issues these

documents encourage churches to review their perspectives. The next section will identify the theological assumptions that are behind the churches' view of the impact of the media on the audience and its role in society.

ii. Underlying Beliefs

These documents rightly identify some problems in the interaction between the media and the audience. They assume that the media institutions are increasingly powerful and influence people's values and thus manipulate them to their own ends. At times these values stand against Christian and human values and so must be identified and refuted by the churches. This is seen as an ethical issue and is addressed on the basis of certain theological assumptions. The Uppsala Assembly Report (1968) recognises the fact that the pulpit is no longer the sole authoritative voice. The churches are asked to learn to live in an open situation where their message will carry weight by its own authenticity, by the inherent quality of truth of what they say and do rather than from any accepted authority [Goodall 1968:393]. The report states, "The church can only announce the fullness of the Gospel if it claims the whole of man in his community for its Lord. Therefore it must care for the structures of the community and all that influences them" [Goodall 1968:395]. It continues to note:

People have made this God-given power of communication to serve sub-human ends. It sows hatred, sustains war and through slander poisons interpersonal relationships. Even God's communication to this world, revealed in the Bible, can be perverted. ... Therefore in Christ we are invited to unmask all pseudo-communication which divides rather than unites... [Goodall 1968:396].

According to this statement, the media can distort the truth and damage human relationships. The churches are invited to identify and to unmask this act of distortion and manipulation in Christ. In the Vancouver Assembly Report (1983) theological assumptions are stated clearly using biblical references (Heb 1:1-3; 1Jn 1:1). The report affirms that Jesus' method was the most effective method of Christian communication in which he met people where they are and empowered people to tell their stories [Gill 1983:104].

The Catholic documents went further than the WCC documents in affirming the central role of Jesus in Christian communication. In the pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971), a theological foundation for communication towards human progress is established. It pictures God as one who shares with humans his creative power, and Christ as one who reveals himself as the perfect communicator [Eilers 1993:76]. The document states, "In the institution of the Holy Eucharist, Christ gave us the most perfect, most intimate form of communion between God and man possible in this life, and, out of this, the deepest possible unity between men" [Eilers 1993:76]. The ethical issues raised in the interaction between the media and the audience or the media institutions can be addressed and resolved through Christian principles. From a Christian perspective communication must state the truth and must reflect the context of the audience with all its implications.

This is repeated in the Papal speeches in which they assumed that the teachings of Jesus have "objective moral truth". The church is called to teach and communicate this to all people. The Pontifical Council for Social Communications' document (1989) on Pornography and Violence in the communication media states:

For the church, the first responsibility is that constant, clear teaching of the faith and, therefore, of objective moral truth, including the truth about sexual

morality. In an era of permissiveness and moral confusion, this requires that the church be prophetic voice, and often, a sign of contradiction [Eilers 1993:150].

Through media education churches are called to teach and foster this message to all people. What God communicated to the people during biblical times contained essentially the objective truth and provided values for people's lives. The churches are expected to possess and to pass on these values as codes of practice to their members. If the ethical issues of the media are identified, then the churches should provide the media personnel with the necessary rules and regulations. This study recognises the fact that the Catholic documents are particularly insistent of the existence of an objective moral order. The perspective and the theological basis will be critically studied in the next section.

iii. Critique

The ethical issues raised by the churches seem to assume that the media are powerful tools of communication which can strongly influence people's lives and values. In our critique considerations will be given to five problems which arise from the prominence given to the effect-centred approach. First there is a strong assumption that there is a correlation between some social problems and the effect of the media on the audience. Secondly certain variables involved in the interaction between the media and the audience are not given importance. Thirdly there is less emphasis on the role of mediation and the ritual use of the media by the audience. Fourthly there is a generalisation about the issues relating to the media and their effect on the audience. The final problem is the theological basis on which this perspective is being developed.



First there is a general assumption in this model that the use of the mass media is related to some of the problems in society [directly or indirectly]. For example the WCC Assembly report in Harare (1998) argues that the contemporary mass media promote consumerist values and widen the gap between rich and poor, powerful and powerless [WCC Web 1999:25]. In this report the term 'media' itself refers to television, radio or newspaper. Hamelink [1975:27] notes that some of the church documents assume that the media have a powerful effect on their audiences. For him they are strongly influenced by a *uni-directional cause-effect model*. He points out that the conclusion of social scientific research shows the media as contributory rather than causative. This study agrees with Hamelink that the role of the media should be examined within the wider social and cultural context of the audience and of the communicator.

According to the statements, Media institutions or personnel are considered to be responsible for the values that arise from the content of the media and should be challenged about such issues. These values shape and influence the audience's view and thus could give rise to some of the social problems. These statements assume that these values are promoted by certain meanings that arise from the content of the media. It can be argued that often the media simply mediate or reinforce a wide range of meanings and the audiences construct their own meanings from the content. Sometimes the content (e.g. news) may have an influence on the public but this cannot be generalised for all occasions. Meanings arise not only from the content of the media but also from the context of the communicator as well as that of the audiences.

The interaction between the media and the audience is a complex process. A computer-based content analysis on the *Leicester Mercury* tabloid newspaper, as part of the author's post graduate research, revealed a complex link between the content, the medium (newspaper), the editors, the journalists, the managing directors and the audience [Joshva 1996:5-6]. The effect of a particular medium such as television and their content at one particular time may be very effective but in a different situation they may have little impact. The effect of the media on the audience and the social problems cannot be directly correlated even though at times the content of the media might contribute to some of those problems. There is a clear need to see the media's impact on the audience within the wider social context by using a range of cultural variables.

Secondly the churches' documents do not recognise the complexity in the interaction between the media and the audience. In the effect-centred approach to the media, there is less emphasis on the many different variables¹⁹ involved in the process of communication. Søgaaard [1993:11] points out that many of the problems in Christian communication arise from confusing variables with constants. There is less awareness about these variables among the Christian institutions which leads them to generalisations about the effect of the media on the audiences. There is a wide range of variables involved in this interactive process and so the role of the media should be seen within the context of other social processes. This context of social process in every society varies with space and time variables and so it is difficult to generalise certain principles of communication into universally applicable regulations. The document *Communio et Progressio* recognises the fact that:

The moral worth and validity of any communication does not lie solely in its theme or intellectual content. The way in which it is presented, the way in

which it is spoken and treated and even the audience for which it is designed - all these factors must be taken into account [Eilers 1993:78].

If all these factors (audience included) are taken into account then other processes that contribute to these factors need to be considered. The media alone cannot be blamed for the meanings or values that contribute to the social problems. At times the media and their contents simply reflect changes in other social processes or extend the sphere of interaction in one or the other processes. A shift in communication took place when television was introduced as a medium of communication. This has changed the perception of communication to some extent, and has also influenced the audience's use of the media. Unless the audiences have access to television sets the communicator cannot transmit his programmes to them.

The variables make the interaction between the media and the audience a complex process that cannot be analysed quantitatively. The negative or positive effect of the media on the audience cannot be scientifically measured or identified. [McQuail 1983:52]. It is essential for a Christian communicator to become aware of different variables involved in this interaction between the media and the audience. Burgoon [1994:38] identified three sets of variables in the communication process - source, receiver and content²⁰. The problems and issues in the interaction between the media and the audience differ within different historical and social contexts because of these variables.

Even the social scientific methodologies that are applied to analyse and study the interaction between the media and the audience could not establish any direct or indirect effects [Gauntlett 1995]. In the effect-centred approach the flow of communication is from the communicator to the audience. In a similar way the churches are called to communicate their own principles to the audience. If the

churches become aware of the variables in communication, then they can see the role of the media within the wider social and cultural context.

Thirdly even though these documents identify communication as a social process, they place less emphasis on the mediation and ritual role of the media within a particular social and cultural context. The influence of political, technological and cultural processes on the media needs to be recognised in order to see the media's role within a wider context of the audience. After doing audience research in Leicester, Halloran [1995A:44] concludes that media institutions are one of the social institutions amongst many which contribute towards a multi-cultural society. He also highlights the way in which complex and conflicting values are mediated and are reinforced through various forms of communication among the diverse audiences. Halloran's study puts forward a need for analysing the different roles of the media within the context of the wider social context [1995:41-3]. It is difficult to analyse how and why the audience derives a particular value from a particular content. It is almost impossible to identify under what circumstances an audience is motivated to change their values or behaviour.

Gauntlett in his book, *Moving Experiences: Understanding Television's Influences and Effects*, highlights the disadvantages in the effect-oriented arguments. He concludes by saying that, "The causes of violence and crime seem much more likely to be found in poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and psychological background than in television programmes" [Gauntlett 1995:119]. After studying all the effect-oriented social scientific studies, he concludes that many of them cannot see the audience's role and context in the construction of meanings. Thus the media's role should be seen within the wider context of the audience's individual and

collective context.

Meanings that arise during the interaction between the communicator, the media and the audience might contribute to these values and influence the opinion of the audience. It is difficult to identify the way in which the meanings are constructed or even mediated through the media. It has already been pointed out that the meanings arise not only from the content but also from the communicator and from the audience. Graddol [1994:16] identifies a social model of communication in which meanings arise from an interaction between the medium and its social context.

The role and the function of the media should be seen within the wider context of political, social, economic and cultural processes. Hamelink [1975:28] points out that some of the church documents do not take account of the long-range socio-cultural roles of the media in terms of their contribution to the whole process of cultural socialisation. However some of the later documents acknowledge this socialising effect of the media. Soukup [1993:77] notices that the documents tend to take the mass media on their own terms. This for him leads to a kind of optimistic or idealised view of the media which sees them in instrumental terms and not as social structures. The role and function of the media need to be seen within the wider social and cultural processes that are occurring in a particular society. The churches' reports do not seem to have realised that the interaction between the media and the audience are subject to enormous variables and the gospel truth cannot simply be imparted as a series of rules and regulations.

Fourthly some of the statements in these documents can be interpreted as generalisation of the issues relating to communication. When they refer to the mass media, they do not mention a particular medium or a particular programme under

review. Hamelink [1975] and Soukup [1993] have identified the contradiction that while they raising some doubts about the impartiality of the media these documents call for their use in the mission and ministry of the church.

Such generalisations, regarding the effect of the mass media ignore the complexity of the communication process. For example, the Vancouver Assembly, report states that “The mass media in many affluent countries distort and diminish the life of the world, by packaging it as entertainment, or simply as propaganda” [Gill 1983:105]. In the Harare WCC Assembly issued a statement saying:

The WCC should continue to explore the tremendous potential opened up by technological developments in the area of communication, while at the same time remaining attentive to the challenges posed by contemporary mass media, particularly in promoting consumerist values and in widening the gap between rich and poor, powerful and powerless [WCC Web 1999].

This statement calls for the WCC’s use of the media, but at the same time, it should remain attentive to the challenges they pose. The generalisation is made that the contemporary mass media promote consumerist values and widen the gap between rich and poor. Yet the media may not be solely to blame for the present social situation.

By studying one context in which the media made an impact, one should not generalise these observations to all situations and try to develop a set of codes of media practices. Using these generalised ethical assumptions does not solve the issues that arise from the impact of the media on the audience. By referring to *Inter Mirifica* Emmanuel [1999:61] highlights the contrasts between what the Catholic church (Catholic) perceives to do as it communicates, and what it exhorts the civil authority to do. The church should not impose in the media what she herself cannot practice. Emmanuel points out the way in which the Catholic Church silences some

of their theologians [1999:62]. While addressing the ethical issues regarding the effect of the mass media the churches need to study them within the wider social and cultural context. Social problems such as discrimination or poverty or perverting human values, cannot be solved simply by changing the content or the media practices. Christian communicators themselves need to engage in the media of the audience.

In looking at the ethical issues from a Christian perspective, it must be noted that the media alone cannot be blamed for widening the divisions between poor and rich or for the increase in violence in a society. Dubois-Dumee [1978] argues that the churches have a problem with communication media. In the church there are too many moralists and too many generalisations. Mass media are viewed as one-way systems that have a direct impact on their audience. In the church documents discussed there is an absence of reflection on contemporary culture and its impact on the media. The churches are not aware of the wide range of meanings arising from the context of the audience which are different from those of the mass media. They do not recognise the fact that meanings arise from other social processes and that communication at any particular time mediates the changes in other processes.

Finally the theological perspective in these documents puts emphasis on the transmission view in which God is seen as the source of communication. Reviewing these documents Soukup [1993:77] comes to the conclusion that the theological foundations on which the moral claims were made were not clarified and are sometimes misapplied. For example in the Uppsala report it states:

Communication is also the way in which God makes himself known to man, and man responds to God. God speaks, the church <proclaims> our doctrinal

shorthand sees active and creative communication as the source and motivating force of all life [Goodall 1968:394].

The WCC Assembly of Vancouver affirms by stating:

God spoke through those who told stories, compose poems, and spoke the prophetic word. "In these last days God spoke through God's own son" (Heb 1:3). Jesus Christ is God's Communication at its clearest, costliest and most demanding. It was there from the beginning: We have heard it (1 John 1:1). That was Christian communication [Gill 1983:104].

The statements of WCC Assemblies highlight the fact that God remains the source of Christian meanings. This study argues that God makes himself known to man but in the form of a servant and on the cross. God's involvement in human communication recognises its limitations and highlights the need for sharing with the audience within their limitations.

Many who uphold this effect-centred approach believe that the Christian faith has all the answers. They assume that the church can provide absolute solutions to all these problems or that it can solve them by communicating and by converting people to the Christian faith. These documents have not recognised the complexity in communication. It has already been argued that the meanings do not simply flow from the media or from their content or even from the communicator to the audience, but rather they arise when communicators and audiences participate, share and interact among themselves.

Addressing these issues may be possible by participating through the media that the people share. By engaging with the masses in their struggle to understand their lives, and by helping them to reinterpret their faith, Christian communicators may enable them to address these ethical issues. They need to help the audience, through the media, to interpret their beliefs so that they may relate them to their

context. Through their engagement with audiences, the churches and their communicators may enable them to address problems by themselves. There is a need to develop a theological basis for an effective interaction between an audience's need and expectations, the media's demands and the Christian message.

The gospel story needs to be made available without condemning, and without generalising, but through continued interaction with the audience. The ethical problems are not merely created by the media but also by the social conditions within which the audience and the communicator interact. It is right to emphasise the complexity of the interaction between media and audience and to note the number of variables involved. This should not lead to exclusive blame of the media or media personnel, but rather should lead to an examination of the process concerned with Christian values and principles. There is a need for Christian communicators to interact with audiences' beliefs, and with their social context through the media that they share. Having critically analysed these documents, this study applauds the way in which both WCC Assemblies' reports and Pontifical Commission's documents have tried to address the issues relating to the mass media and social communication. The problems have been identified in the churches' approaches (instrumental and effect-centred) highlight the need for an alternative approach of communication and the need for a theological basis for such an approach.

C. Participatory Approach

I have already shown that some of the WCC Reports (particularly the Vancouver Assembly) and Pontifical Documents (*Communio et Progressio*) defined communication in terms of 'sharing' and 'participating'. In the participatory approach communication becomes a two-way interactive process because it shares meanings and establishes social relationships [WACC 1997:7]. The media are expected to serve and enhance this perspective on communication. WACC is emphatic in promoting or encouraging this approach. On the one hand it recognises the fact that the media operate from the centre to the periphery, and on the other hand it points out that communication is, by definition, participatory. By noting this contradiction WACC has emphasised the need for enabling the process of communication to be more participatory, liberating and prophetic. WACC's statements and their importance will be analysed in the following section.

i. Statements

Under the title *Christian Principles of Communication*, WACC has discussed a participatory approach which was developed from a Christian perspective. It states:

Communication as a human right encompasses the traditional freedoms: of expression, of the right to seek, receive and impart information. But it adds to these freedoms, both for individuals and society, a new concept, namely that of access, participation and two-way flow [WACC 1997:7].

This statement clearly challenges the two perspectives stated above and brings out the importance of the participatory approach. Before identifying this approach, the declaration notes the problem of the media in which the flow is from top to bottom. It

points out that the mass media do not meet the information and communication needs felt by individuals and groups. The participatory approach also emphasises the role of communication in constructing communities and in supporting and developing cultures. But the mass media are seen as:

a form of power and often part of a system of power. They are usually structured in such a way as to reinforce the status quo in favour of the economically and politically powerful [WACC 1997:8].

Some of the critical points that are used against the effect-centred approach are relevant to this particular statement which ignores the whole idea of participatory communication. Because of their nature, the media have a dominating effect on people which is contrary to genuine communication.

In the Manila Declaration (1989), WACC Congress reiterates similar principles of communication. The Congress delegates adopted the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) unanimously. This shows that WACC has a great interest in enabling the communication systems to become more participatory and interactive and in challenging existing media practices [WACC 1997:10]. The Manila Declaration states:

Mass media and the information industries are structures of power. They are intertwined with national centres of political, economic and military power and are increasingly linked at the global level [WACC 1997:11].

In this declaration the Congress participants addressed this media issue by noting the responsibility of communication workers in these matters. They called upon WACC to challenge unjust power structures and to enable journalists and the communication workers to become aware of such problems. They recommended that WACC should

build up and widen its network of Christian and secular groups and institutions and all people of goodwill in order to participate in the people's communication process [WACC 1997:13].

In the Mexico Declaration (1995) the major theme is *Communication for Human Dignity*. It points out the importance of empowering women and men in all regions of the world and identifies the richness of communication within all cultures which are life-enhancing [WACC 1997:18]. Participatory communication should aim at restoring or bringing human dignity to all people. The Congress participants recommend:

Christian communicators need to undertake serious theological reflection on their work and mission, particularly on the challenges posed by new information technologies.... Christian communicators need to engage in a process of conscientisation with respect to communication in pursuit of religious tolerance, justice and peace [WACC 1997:20].

The participants have realised a need for a theological basis of communication rather than merely a change in the communication perspective. This also demands that Christian communicators participate in this process of conscientisation. This declaration particularly affirms deep-rooted human values and plural expressions as well as social contradictions. While discussing the participatory approach, WACC began to realise the need for a theological approach which is not often given importance in other documents. This participatory approach is developed from the theological principles stated in these declarations.

ii. Underlying beliefs

In the WACC documents theological principles of communication are given at the beginning of the statements. Various models of communication are highlighted in the document entitled *Christian Principles of Communication*. The theological basis that is developed reflects WACC's interest in pointing out the participatory characteristics of Christian communication. Christ's own communication is seen as an act of self-giving, based on Paul's letter to the Philippians (2:7). It states Christ "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant". The document comments:

He ministered to all, but took up the cause of the materially poor, the mentally ill, the outcasts of society, the powerless and oppressed. In the same way, Christian communication should be an act of love which liberates all who take part in it [WACC 1997:5].

This theological statement clearly outlines the way in which WACC interprets the verse in the letter to the Philippians. In order to participate in people's communication, Jesus serves the people by emptying himself and taking the form of a servant. For WACC, the gospel 'needs to be constantly reinterpreted from the perspectives of the poor and the oppressed' [WACC 1997:5]. It demands that the communicators express God's kingdom rather than the divided church. The church is called to embody and testify to the central values of the kingdom which is participatory in nature.

The First Congress in Manila did not emphasise a proper theological basis for the perspectives of communication that were developed in the declaration. But in the second International Congress in Mexico (1995), there was a discussion about communication ethics, communication and religion, and Christian communication.

The WACC calls for serious theological reflection on their work and mission, particularly on the challenges posed by new information technologies [WACC 1997:20]. It also states:

Christian churches and organisations should recognise and respond to the challenges of the media age and develop an organic rather than instrumental understanding of communication media. They should give attention to the reinterpretation of the contents of Christian discourse, as based on the deposit of faith. Christian communicators need to consider both the biblical text as well as cultural context in their communication work [WACC 1997:20].

This statement clearly points out the need for hermeneutic work to be done on the biblical narratives in order to develop a theological basis. In order to bring about changes in the perspectives of the churches on communication, their theological foundations need to be reinterpreted or widened by an alternative understanding of the biblical narratives.

WACC Congress declarations foresee the need for a theological basis from which participatory communication can be brought about within the Christian media practices and the churches' communication. In such cases they identify a few relevant biblical passages which highlight the importance of the participatory nature of Christian communication. WACC's principles of communication will be critically analysed in the next section.

iii. Critique

This study recognises the role of WACC in encouraging the churches to realise the real meaning of communication by giving importance to its participatory

characteristics. Christian communicators are invited not only to participate in people's communication but also to challenge the role of the media in society. WACC's declarations show the scholarly nature of the statements and reflect the practical experience of the participants. I have already noted that these declarations highlighted the need for a proper theological basis for such a participatory communication. Some of the critical remarks however directed at the effect-centred approach are also relevant to the WACC's statements.

There are three issues in the WACC documents that will be identified in this section. This research attempts to address these issues in the following chapters. Firstly the primary challenge before the churches is how to share the gospel with their audiences. The WACC statement on *Christian Principles of Communication* notes "The Gospel, being the Good News for the poor, needs to be constantly reinterpreted from the perspectives of the poor and the oppressed" [WACC 1997:5]. This view of Christian communication shows vital characteristics of the gospel. It is important to emphasise this aspect of the gospel in a context where poverty and oppression is an everyday reality. This is one aspect of the gospel story. Christian communicators need to be aware of other characteristics, too: spiritual nourishment is also an important element. In this sense bringing awareness among the poor and oppressed involves enhancing the audience's faith and enabling them to come closer to God. Thus it is essential to reinterpret the gospel from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed while taking into account their spiritual needs as well. It is essential to bring the people closer to God as well as to bring them out of their poverty and oppression, even though at times it may not be possible to communicate directly this spiritual aspect of the gospel.

Secondly the media's role is seen only in one-way lines:

The mass media have been organised along one-way lines: they flow from top to bottom, from the centre to the periphery, from the few to the many, from the "information rich" to the "information poor".... Many think that this is the way the media have to work [WACC 1997:7].

The Manila Declaration points out, "Mass media and information industries are structures of power. They are intertwined with national centres of political, economic and military power and are increasingly linked at the global level" [WACC 1997:11]. These statements portray the mass media as if they reflect the existing system of power and reinforce the division between rich and poor. The document argues that only by changing the communication technologies is a higher degree of participation possible [WCC 1997:7]. It can be argued that divisions between rich and poor have always existed, but the mass media reflect and reinforce certain myths that justify such divisions. Other social processes such as industrialisation and urban movement have also contributed towards such division.

In some contexts the media contribute to an awareness of mass movement against such divisions. The media play an important role in the life of communities at regional and national levels in various contexts. They have become part of people's ritual engagement with a wider culture. Thus it is important to enable people to use the mass media to participate and interact among themselves. It is a challenge for Christian communicators who engage in a mass medium to interact with the audience. Their involvement should contribute towards a wider participation of the audience and challenge the existing systems. Without simply blaming the media, Christian communicators should attempt to participate in the mass media in such a

way that this awareness is fostered among the audience. This should lead to wider participation and interaction among the audiences and thus lead to a search for social and religious meanings among them.

Thirdly WACC identified two main themes in their international congresses in Manila and in Mexico. The themes are: *Communication for Community* and *Communication for Human Dignity* [WACC 1997:10, 18]. The primary purposes of communication are well stated by WACC in its declarations. They should aim at building community and should enable the people to become aware of their dignity. The best way of creating a community is to enable the audience to identify and address the issues themselves. Communicators cannot build a community for the audience, rather the audience themselves contribute towards building a community. Even before communicators participate in their audiences' communication, the audiences are already engaged in a communication process through which they share and exchange their social and religious meanings. The communicators have to participate in this communication process together with their audience to enable them to become aware of these issues. While there is a need for *communication for community* and *communication for human dignity* the communicator needs to recognise *communication of the community*. By participating in the communication process of the community, can the communicator interact with them in order to raise awareness of the issues of community and of human dignity. In this case the communication starts the audience and the communicator himself is a participant along with them in their search for the wider meanings of community and human dignity.

This critical study of the documents of the churches points to the necessity for

a perspective in which the communicator shares and participates in people's communication process and interacts with their beliefs and worldviews. In order to bring about a change in the churches' perspective it is essential to develop a theological basis of communication. In order to develop this perspective and a theological basis, Carey's ritual view, Freire's pedagogical principles and Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication are brought together in the following sections.

4. *Carey's Cultural Understanding of Communication*

In the above section, it is argued that the instrumental and effect-centred perspectives were given prominence in the church documents. These documents did not highlight the importance of the interaction between the media, the communicator and the audience within their wider social context. Sharing the messages and meanings is a complex process because many variables are involved in the participation of the communicator, media and audience. Thus there is a need to develop an alternative paradigm of communication; one that recognises the complexity of the communication process itself and which also views communication as an interaction within the social and cultural processes. Carey's ritual approach might provide a background to develop an interactive perspective from a cultural understanding of communication.

Carey [1989:14-5] identifies two main conceptions of communication; the 'transmission view' and the 'ritual view'. He argues that the transmission view of communication is formed from a metaphor of geography or transportation, whereas the ritual definition is linked to terms such as sharing, participation, association and

the possession of a common faith. In the ritual understanding, communication is linked to terms such as 'sharing' and 'participating' in an exchange of the message and its meanings, and those who engage in it are seen as participants. For Carey communication is directed towards the maintenance of society in time and the representation of shared belief, and is viewed as the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality [1989:18].

While recognising the importance of Carey's shift in the emphasis, communication is not limited to a static circular process where people share what is available to them. Carey [1989] argues that in the ritual view, the reading of the news is not merely an act of receiving information but also an act of engaging in a drama in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed. The use of the media by the audience needs to be studied within wider cultural and social practices. He sees communication as a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed [Carey 1989:21-23]. In his understanding both the acts of maintaining and transforming realities are considered. It can be argued that the communication process alone does not determine the transformation and maintenance of a community. Other social processes such as technological advancement and the migration of people from rural to urban areas, or from one country to the other, also contribute to the transformation and maintenance of culture and also to the process of communication.

While sharing and participating in the communication process within a particular social and cultural network, audiences construct their own messages and meanings regardless of what is being communicated. Sometimes the communicated messages reflect and influence the audience's view of the reality. Sometimes they

reinforce and mediate it. Carey sees, "Human thought, in the new model, is seen more as interpretations persons apply to experience, constructions of widely varying systems of meanings the verification of which cannot be exhausted by the methods of science" [1989:63]. Meanings are not merely constructed but also are mediated through the content of the media and shared by the community. In this sense the communicator is not the only source of meaning, for meanings exist in the community even before they are communicated.

Communication is seen as an interpretation in which meanings are constructed from, and placed upon the experience of a particular community and its members. In this interpretation a medium can interpret the experience and cannot avoid a multiplicity of meanings evolving out of that interpretation. Carey [1989:25] notes that language (as a medium) often distorts, obfuscates, and confuses people's perception of this external world, yet they rarely dispute this matter-of-fact realism. He also points out that communication cannot be revealed in nature through some objective method free from the influence of culture. He further notes that peoples' minds and lives are shaped by their total experience or by the representation of experience which for them is communication [1989:33]. This is opposed to the assumption that people's reality is being shaped and influenced by the content of communication on its own.

For Carey [1989:34] social life includes the sharing of aesthetic experiences²¹, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments and intellectual notions. The word 'aesthetic' is related to philosophy of taste or of the perception of the beautiful²². He recognises the shift in the understanding of communication from the transmission

approach to the ritual approach and the complexity in the process of communication.

Thus Carey notes:

Culture, however, is never singular and univocal. It is, like nature itself, multiple, various, and varietal. ...The scientific conceit is the presumption that living in scientific frames of reference is unequivocally superior to an aesthetic, commonsensical, or religious ones. The deliberating effect of this conceit is the failure to understand meaningful realms of discourse in terms of which people conduct their lives [1989:65-66].

In Carey's view communication is a process that arises out of the cultural reality in which participants of the process share and exchange their messages. In such an understanding communication, as a process, is conditioned by the social and cultural context. There are no more senders and receivers in this process, as they both share the media in order to engage in it. They are involved not merely in the process of sending and receiving information but of sharing and participating in the process of celebrating and understanding each other's lives within their social and cultural framework.

In my approach, communication is seen as an ongoing process in which people engage in sharing and constructing messages and meanings. This is in continuity with other historical processes of society [such as industrialisation and urbanisation]. At times communication makes an impact on other social processes; in turn they also affect the process of communication. Black and Bryan [1995] identify the 'interaction model' in which communication is defined as a process through which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach mutual understanding. It is a process through which persons create, maintain, and alter social order and relationships and identities. The action of creating and sharing are part of the communication process. As this process occurs within a social

framework, it is essential to see it as a continuation of a process from the past into the present and taking participants into the future.

Carey provides an understanding of communication in which communicators and audience are seen as mutual and equal partners. When he defines it as a process in a particular social context, he recognises the way meanings are mediated, shared and constructed in a ritual and cultural manner. For Carey the ritual understanding of communication does not exclude the process of information transmission or attitude change [1989:21]. His analysis also recognises the limitations of the media in portraying, reflecting and reinforcing the existing realities that people experience in their daily life. He sees no objective way to understand this process and considers the mechanism to be complex. It includes not only sending and receiving information but also celebrating life by sharing aesthetic experience, religious ideas, personal values and sentiments.

Communication, as a ritual event, occurs in a community's life without any meaning being shared or constructed but simply as part of celebrating life. This cultural view highlights the importance of the interactive characteristics of communication. This shift in the understanding of communication emphasises four things: the importance of the audience's role in the construction of meaning, the impact of their cultural context, their interest in sharing aesthetic experience, and the medium that they share.

Carey's view leads to a realisation that Christian communication should not be understood merely as communicating the Christian faith in the form of an information package or as a set of rules and regulations to solve ethical issues. From this cultural perspective, Christian communication can best be interpreted as a

process in which the communicator and the audience participate and engage in a search for religious and social meanings. While they interact through their cultural forms and celebrate their life together they can share each other's experience of faith and life. In order to interact with the audience, the Christian communicators need to engage in the audience's process of communication regardless of their religion and beliefs.

If this cultural approach is interpreted theologically, it can be argued that God is no longer a mere sender but the one who shares and participates with human beings in the process of communication in order to understand and to be understood by them. God's involvement in the process of communication cannot be seen as an exchange of information about himself but as a celebration of life together with human beings by sharing aesthetic experiences, faith, values and sentiments. This view would help the churches give importance to the cultural view. In the following section, an attempt is made to develop a theological basis for such a shift with the help of Kierkegaard's idea of indirect communication. Such an approach to communication might help churches to develop more vigorous models for Christian communications.

5. Paulo Freire's Understanding of Communication

The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has influenced many scholars from Asia, Africa and South America who have studied participatory aspects of communication. His primary aim is to develop a dialogical method in education. His principles of communication are developed from the analogy of a teacher-student relationship. Even though he has developed his method primarily for education, the principles

behind such a method help this study to widen the understanding of interactive communication. I identify three principles that he develops in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [Freire 1972]. They are: Banking Education (communication) versus Liberating Education (communication); Dialogue; and Action and Reflection.

In the first principle a communicator (teacher) and his or her audience (student) are equal participants of communication in which the communicator's thinking is authenticated by the authenticity of the audience's thinking [Freire 1972:50]. The second principle is that through dialogue the divide between the communicator and the audience ceases to exist. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In Freire's pedagogy, a third principle emerges in which "action and reflection are not separate activities but an organic whole and it is this dialectical interplay of action and reflection that constitutes the process of concentization" [Thomas 1994:51].

A. Banking Versus Liberating

Freire uses the imagery of a teacher-student relationship in order to identify the problem of banking education and to point out the importance of liberating education. In the banking method, education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor [Freire 1972:47]. In this sense communication is a transfer of knowledge from the communicator (teacher) to the audience (student). Freire is critical of this method of communication. For him it is to minimise or annul the audience's creative power and turn them into containers to be filled by the communicator. The banking

communication is similar to that of the instrumental approach in which the communicator is a sender and the audience is a passive receiver.

Against this banking method Freire proposes a liberating or problem-posing method which bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection [1972:56]. This view considers people as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation. Liberating communication consists in acts of cognition and not in transfer of information. Freire's writings reflect his own South American context in which oppressors used certain existing forms to socialise and to oppress a large mass of people. In the liberating method of education, the teacher of the students and the students of the teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-students with student-teachers. The students are now co-investigators along with their teachers [Freire 1972:56].

Methods of communication should not be based on the banking model. They should view the communicator and the audience as equal participants in the communication process. The gap between the communicator and the audience disappears as they both engage in this process with the freedom to share their views and with critical thinking.

B. Dialogue

The best way the communicator and the audience can engage in communication is through dialogue. Freire states:

Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's

“depositing” ideas in another nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be “consumed” by the participants in the discussion [Freire 1972:61].

In this definition of dialogue Freire again distinguishes between the banking and dialogical methods of communication. In order to make dialogical communication participatory and egalitarian act, love should be the foundation. It requires faith in people, faith in their power to make and to remake, to create and to recreate, faith in their vocation; to be more fully human. It also demands trust and hope. It requires and generates critical thinking. In this dialogic model there is an equal opportunity to share participants’ views and beliefs. The communicator and the audience share their beliefs, critical thinking, worldviews and communicative forms. They both engage in the same process of communication in order to hold the dialogue. The starting point must be the present, existential and concrete situation in which the audience lives. This dialogic understanding of communication widens the cultural understanding of communication developed in Carey’s ritual view.

C. Action and Reflection

Communicators share with their audiences in such a way that the cognizable object mediates their capacity for understanding. The reality cannot be transformed without posing the audience’s false consciousness of reality as a problem. Thus the interaction between the communicator and the audience should lead to the transformation of reality around them. This transformation needs to enhance the process of humanisation of the audience [Freire 1972:106]. Pradip Thomas notes:

In Freire's pedagogy, action and reflection are not separate activities but an organic whole and it is this dialectical interplay of action and reflection that constitutes the process of conscientizacao (conscientization) [1994:50].

Only when the action follows reflection then is the communication true communication. So reflection is only real when it sends the communicator and the audience back to the given situation in which they act and live. The communicator and the audience conscientize themselves by participating in the communication process [Freire 1973: 36].

'Freire and Communication'

In Freire's views of education, the communicator and the audience are equal participants in the investigation of knowledge. Their participation in the communication process would lead to the disappearance of distinctions between them [Thomas 1994:51]. The act of critical thinking is the primary element of participatory communication. The task of the communicator is to enable the audience to become aware of their critical faculties and to relate them to the tasks of political struggle and development.

Freire's concept is relevant to my study because it attempts to view communication as a process among various other social processes. The social, cultural and political contexts in which communication occurs are given importance. Because in his Latin America powerful oppressors violently subjugated many people, Freire wanted communication to reflect and address such issues. For him changes in material world alone would not bring about changes in social structures. The dominant mythological concepts that serve the oppressors should be challenged and

replaced through critical thinking by alternative principles arising from the people themselves. The task of the communicator is to participate in their audiences' process of communication in such a way that the audiences become aware of these issues.

While recognising the importance of Freire's work, my study suggests that communication does not merely arise from the needs in society. It attempts to address the social and cultural issues while enabling the audience themselves to find a solution. The primary task of Christian communication is not merely to humanise the audience (to liberate from the oppression) but also to bring people closer to God. The aim of the communicator's participation is not only to liberate the audiences from their oppressors but to guide them to establish faith in God. This implies a continued interaction through which the Christian communicator would present the meanings of God along with other social meanings. This interaction may bring awareness among the audience and enable them to interpret or to reinterpret their religious faith. Without enriching faith in God, humanisation may become meaningless. This will be explained in the interactive aspect of communication.

6. *Kierkegaard's Concept of Indirect Communication*

A need for a theological basis for such an alternative approach has already been noted in my critical study of the churches' documents. This section will focus on the three essential aspects in Kierkegaard's understanding of communication that contribute to the theological basis. The first is his emphasis on the indirect communication of Christ to his hearers through a 'sign of contradiction'. He speaks of the impossibility of communicating Christ directly or objectively. The second is that the teacher or the communicator needs to begin from the place where the learner

or audience²³ is. The third point is his emphasis on the ethical issues in which the need for sharing higher virtues is emphasised. While enabling the learners to choose certain values, the teacher learns together with them. In this process, the teacher shares his message in order to enable the learner to realise his capability and to choose to live with virtues. Kierkegaard's three aspects of communication arise out of his theological concern for communicating the Christian faith. These principles and their applications in constructing an alternative paradigm will be noted in this section.

A. Indirect Communication

In his book *Training in Christianity*, Kierkegaard [(1850) 1941A] argues that by his very nature Jesus did not directly communicate himself to the world, even to those closest to him. Jesus' message, Kierkegaard notes, was indirect and his followers were asked to believe in it. Indirect communication is defined as the opposite of direct communication that can be produced by the art of reduplicating communication²⁴ [1941A:132]. This means there is no objective way of communicating Christ²⁵. Kierkegaard states:

If someone says directly 'I am God; the father and I are one, this is direct communication. But if the person who says it, the communicator, is this individual human being... just like others, then this communication is not quite entirely direct. ... that an individual human being should be God - whereas what he says is entirely direct. Because of the communicator, communication contains a contradiction, it becomes indirect communication [(1850) 1991:134].

In Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication, Christ did not communicate directly to his followers through his teachings. Those who believe in Christ could

recognise the 'sign of contradiction' in him. For Kierkegaard [1941A:124] Christ is a sign, 'a sign of contradiction'. A sign of contradiction is a sign which contains in itself a contradiction. To be a sign of contradiction is to be another thing which stands in opposition to what one immediately is [1941A:124-5]. Christ is a sign of contradiction because on the one hand he says he is one with the Father and on the other he is an ordinary human being like others and thus contradicts himself.

The sign of contradiction that Christ offered was offensive, and so, too, the indirect communication of a Christian will also offend [Arbaugh and Arbaugh1968:274]. For Kierkegaard Christ places before individuals a choice, and while they choose, Christ himself is revealed to them [1941A:98]. Kierkegaard points out that Christ called on people to accept him as Lord by accepting rejection and by allowing himself to be crucified. It is in the form of an irony that attempts to persuade a learner to choose to believe that Jesus is God.

The second point that Kierkegaard makes in defence of indirect communication is that it exists only for faith. He argues:

He (Christ) is the paradox, the object of faith, existing only for faith. But all historical communication is communication of 'knowledge'; hence from history one can learn nothing about Christ. History makes out Christ to be other than He truly is [1941A:28].

For Kierkegaard faith is thus the response to a communication that is indirect and direct communication of Christ is an impossibility²⁶. He argues that the 'proofs' in Scripture for Christ's divinity, such as his miracles and his resurrection from the dead, are recognised through faith. The miracle stories prove that all these conflict with reason and therefore are objects of faith [1941A:29].

In Kierkegaard's theological understanding God is seen as one who has given freedom of choice to human beings; the choice whether or not to believe in him. In Kierkegaard's argument God chooses to participate in communication with his people through indirect communication. It is God who wants to communicate indirectly²⁷. It brings a new understanding to the relationship between God and human beings, as communication does not simply flow from God to people. God enters the human level of understanding and uses the form through which he attempts to share his love and care for his people.

Kierkegaard was critical of the Christendom²⁸ that has transformed the whole of Christianity into direct communication [1941A:97]. For Kierkegaard, until now, people taught Christianity as knowledge that has triumphed over actuality and reduplication [Pattison 1992:74-6]. By making it a dogmatic and apologetic confession, the act of communicating faith becomes merely an imparting of knowledge and information about God, and about Christ, which for Kierkegaard, is a misunderstanding of Christianity.

These criticisms are relevant to the theological basis of the present churches' approach to Christian communication. By adopting the instrumental approach, Christian communication is made the equivalent of imparting information and knowledge about God and Christ by the churches to the people through a medium. Swenson [1941:238] argues that for Kierkegaard the nature of faith is distinctive and cannot be transferred from one person to another as a complete package. To communicate the faith, with all the questions neatly resolved in a planned programme that would lead the recipient to a full Christian faith, is not possible. Direct communication is a distortion of the truth. The truth is distorted because the

subjective is objectified [Weber 1993:66]. If Christian communication is direct, then it denies choice to the audience.

In order to participate in the process of communication, churches need to realise the contradiction within the content of their message and the inability to objectively communicate the gospel. On the one hand they would claim the presence of God's saving act in and through the church, and on the other hand they contradict this by choosing the way of the cross which is 'a sign of contradiction'. By enabling the audience to interpret their beliefs and relate them to their context, the churches can indirectly bear witness to the gospel. The churches can bear witness to the gospel through their indirect involvement in the audience's communication process.

The primary task of Christian communication is to offend with a sign of contradiction and enable the audience to choose the meanings of the gospel. This theological basis emphasises the freedom of the audience, and their choice to believe, while attempting to persuade them to believe. This communication cannot be direct because what is communicated cannot be provided with evidence [Pattison 1992:85]. Rather the purpose of Christian communication is to share the gospel through story forms with the audience in such a way that they might interpret their beliefs and relate them to their context. The audience is provided with a choice to believe and to stand alone before God. The emphasis on indirect communication involves recognition of the complexity in sharing the gospel. By recognising the complexities in the audience's communication process Christian communicators need to realise that they can communicate the gospel indirectly while being a witness to it. By realising these complexities, they can interact with the audience as Christ interacted with the people indirectly in the process of communication in biblical times.

B. Midwife's Role of the Communicator

In order to enter into a communicative act with his audience, Christ interacted with his audience by constructing a sign, a sign of contradiction to catch their attention and to challenge them. Kierkegaard argues that Christ did not communicate directly²⁹ and his direct utterances can serve, like the miracles, to make people attentive [1941:131]. This Christological understanding of Kierkegaard highlights the basic principles of an indirect communication in which communicator and audience are seen as participants (learners) in the search for meanings of the gospel.

This aspect of indirect communication is explained with the help of the midwife imagery. Kierkegaard borrows the midwifery image (*maieutic*) from Plato and uses it in his *Fragments*. The imagery appears in the dialogues of Plato where Socrates says,

I am so far like the midwife that I cannot give birth to wisdom... all who are favoured by heaven make progress at a rate seems surprising to others as well as to themselves, although it is clear that they have never learned from me. The many admirable truths they bring to birth have been discovered by themselves from within [Hamilton and Cairns 1963:853-5].

The midwife's role is to help a woman in the process of delivering her child; it is the woman who delivers the child by herself with the help of the midwife. For Kierkegaard the communicator's role, like a midwife, is to help the learners (audiences) to become free and to stand by themselves in the process of believing and entering into the God-relationship [(1847) 1995:276-78]. The communicator remains anonymous in the process. Arbaugh and Arbaugh [1968:274] point out that for Kierkegaard the teacher, like a midwife, should deal with the learner where the learner is, in whatever state he or she may be, and seek to progress from that point towards the eternal. Both are concerned with seeking eternal truth.

The purpose of indirect communication is not to bring the learner into a relationship with the teacher but rather into relationship with God. In an essentially aesthetic age if the teacher is to start where the learner is the teacher must start with the aesthetic - even though the aesthetic is incapable of expressing religious truth [Pattison 1992:72]. Kierkegaard defines aesthetic as a pleasure, which is more than an art, and as personal interest which is more than sheer pleasure. With an aesthetic attitude one is caught up in various attractive experiences of the moment, in a state of immediacy which does not reach beyond itself [Arbaugh and Arbaugh 1968:64].

In his *Training in Christianity*, he identified the learner as being in the age of aesthetics. The teacher has to go to the place where the learner is in order to communicate with him or her indirectly [Kierkegaard 1941]. The age in which the clergy of the established churches are derided as 'poets' and in which the sort of character portrayed in Heiberg's *A Soul After Death*, is also considered as aesthetic [Pattison 1992:62]. The aesthetic age means the age in which the audience engages often in the cultural practices that give them pleasure and entertainment. To make communication effective, there is a need to recognise and share their audience's medium and aesthetic interests. The primary task of the Christian communicator must be to find and to start from the place where the audience is.

C. Choice and not Code

Kierkegaard is also concerned with moral life that for him is learnt by practising the art of such living, together with observing this art as demonstrated by noble examples. In *Either/Or* he uses another metaphor of a judge who views the aesthetical, the ethical and the religious as three great allies [1959(2):150]. The

ethical will not annihilate the aesthetical but transfigure it. In this way Kierkegaard combines indirect communication, Christology, aesthetic and ethical aspects together in the teacher (communicator) and learner (audience) relationship. In combining these aspects of communication, he sets out the goal and the role of the Christian communicator.

The goal of Christian communication should be to bring the audience not into an intellectual acceptance but to a personal acceptance of spiritual and ethical principles through aesthetic characteristics. Kierkegaard notes, "The ethical must be communicated as an art, simply because everyone knows it. The object of communication is consequently not a knowledge but a realisation" [1967 (4): 272]. The learner needs to be prodded into self-awareness in relation to these principles by means of irony, pathos, and dialectic. Such communication addresses an individual, a constituent of the audience, to help him/her to see inwardly and then to choose these principles in the light of his/her God-relationship. It is to enable the individual to seek for himself/herself these principles in communication.

In Christian communication it is essential to recognise the fact that the task is to help audiences to realise their capability and to persuade them to see in themselves these virtues. Pattison argues that the ethical teacher is not concerned to put knowledge into the learner but to draw out from him his own capability or potentiality [1992:74]. Kierkegaard notes, "It may be that science can be pounded into a person, as far as aesthetic capability is concerned and even more so with the ethical, one has to pound out of him" [1967 (4): 285]. He explains this using an analogy in which he illustrates the difference between pounding the soldier out of the farm boy by recognising the capability in him and the soldier studying a manual of

field tactics in order to become a farm boy. It means that ethical communication does not require any kind of knowledge [1967(1):285]. This argument supports the fact that the audience shares certain ethical and social values even before they are communicated to them. The task of the communicator is to make them to realise these values in them.

It is important to note that in Kierkegaard's argument about indirect communication, the communicator should make it clear that he is not the teacher since only God bestows eternal truth on each individual. It leads to an act of recognition on the part of the communicator that the learner somehow already possesses the truth. He must acknowledge that everyone stands absolutely alone in his relationship to God. Arbaugh and Arbaugh argue that in Kierkegaard's understanding this ethical communication develops a response, but does not seek to inform [1968:272-3]. They interpret Kierkegaard's ethical communication as to coax the ethical out of the individual because it already exists inside him or her. They also point out that in ethical and religious communication the teacher is himself a learner who benefits from the response of his pupil [1968:272-4]. This characteristic of ethical communication, as explained, recognises those religious and social meanings as already present in the audience, waiting to be shared and interpreted through the communication process.

It has been noted that a wide range of competing meanings is available to the audience through various social processes. In these circumstances the best way to communicate the ethical meanings is to present them among a wide range of social values that are available to the audience. It is vital to relate those ethical principles to religious beliefs through the aesthetic aspect of communication. This would enable

audiences to read themselves and might make them more aware of the God-relationship.

The communicator's role is not simply to pass on information but, rather to enable the audience to realise the meanings in themselves. Communicators merge into the communication process and lose their identity in order to enable learners to live aesthetically with higher virtues. The Christian communicator, according to Kierkegaard, should also fade into the background leaving the hearers standing solitary in the presence of God. For him, Christ willed to be incognito [1941A:127]. Kierkegaard points out that Christian communication must end in witnessing which he identifies as direct communication [1967(2):1957]. For him witnessing expresses in the recipient's life what he or she has come to believe [1967(1):659]. When the communicators become one with their communication, they become witnesses and are then no longer engaged in indirect communication.

D. Reflection

Kierkegaard's understanding substantially shifts the theological basis of communication. God chooses to communicate with his people indirectly and Christ demonstrated it. Christian communication involves sharing the good news of God's involvement in the human communication process. On the one hand Christian communication is direct in stating that God is with us (Immanuel), and on the other hand there is no evidence provided for such a claim except asking people to believe in it. By engaging in the audience's communication process and by bearing witness to this belief, then the Christian communicator can interact with the audience. This makes Christian communication indirect.

The basic purpose of the indirect communication should be to enable the audience to 'read' themselves and to enable them to stand-alone before God. Kierkegaard's idea of indirect communication expects a Christian communicator to start from where the audience is³⁰. Christian communicators need to participate in the communication process where the audience is participating, by sharing the medium and the format and also their faith, and their world-view with the audience. In this indirect communication, the audience's preferences and tastes need to be taken into consideration and also their qualities of aesthetic appreciation.

In Christian communication it is vital to capture the attention of his audience and to start from where the people are. If people prefer an aesthetic form of communication, then the Christian communicator should use such forms in their communication. Forrester [1993:72-3] in his article on the 'Media and Theology' argues that Christianity belongs within a powerful medium such as television rubbing shoulders alongside other images, stories and instruction. There is a need for Christian communicators to share with the audience their aesthetic qualities and understanding, and to interpret their faith in order to persuade them to have a direct communicative relationship with God.

There is a strong recognition here of the audience role in Christian communication which gives credence to this study in establishing that Jesus himself participated in such a process of communication through parables. Christ interacts with his audience through aesthetic means. This shifts the concept of Christian communication from a sender-receiver model to a model based on indirect communication. In indirect communication the audience does not consist of passive receivers but of active participants, seeking and sharing meanings of eternal truth,

and of life, together with the communicator. In Kierkegaard's understanding of ethical communication there is an emphasis on the ethical capability of the individual. The Christian communicator learns together with the audience by participating in the process of communication. It is essential to enable these individuals to see in themselves their potential to acquire higher virtues. This, for Kierkegaard, is possible through faith.

In order to enable these individuals to see inwardly, the aesthetic aspect of communication should be used. Thus aesthetic aspect, Christian faith and ethical communication are related to each other in Christian communication. These principles in Kierkegaard's indirect communication have helped this study to develop a new theological basis for Christian communication. By identifying these principles in Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication, a theological basis for an alternative paradigm of Christian communication can be developed. However Kierkegaard's understanding of indirect communication needs to be extended into an interactive paradigm.

6. Interactive Approach

An attempt shall now be made to bring Kierkegaard's indirect communication, Freire's dialogical approach and Carey's cultural understanding of communication together in order to develop a new approach to Christian communication. Carey's approach highlights the necessity to shift the present understanding of communication to a cultural one. In his cultural approach, communication was understood to be a process of sharing and participating rather than of sending and receiving. Unless an audience is sharing and interpreting among

themselves, their interactive participation cannot be effective. He also accepts the limitations of the media in portraying the social and cultural realities of the people. He recognises communication as a complex process in which many variables are involved. For him this process cannot be objectively analysed. It is a complex ongoing process in which the participants, both audience and communicator, are involved in the construction of meanings within a particular social context.

This provides an alternative approach to Christian communication in which God and people are seen as participants. Thus the communicator and the audience become active participants in the process. As seen in some of the church documents, Christian communication is thought to be an act of passing on information about God and Christ. This informative knowledge is seen as if it flows from God through Christ to the people through the churches and their media institutions. This theological basis enables them to be authoritative over the content they communicate. The problems with such an understanding of communication have been identified in the previous sections.

In contrast to this Kierkegaard argues that Christ communicated indirectly with his followers. It was also recognised that Christian communicators need to use aesthetic elements in order to attract people's attention. Kierkegaard identified the theological necessity for the communicator to begin from the state of the audience. He also points out that both the communicator and the audience are in the process of coming into a God-relationship. The ethical aspect of this indirect communication, for Kierkegaard, works on choices in which Christian values are shared with aesthetic elements. This forms the theological basis in which God is seen as an effective participant in human communication. In the study of Freire's pedagogy, it

was pointed out that the communicator is a co-worker and participant in the investigation of knowledge. His emphasis on concentization is relevant in the interactive communication because communicator's action follows his or her reflection. The freedom to think critically and to choose an appropriate action is emphasised in Freire's work.

In the process of Christian communication, there is an interaction between people's faith, medium and their social-cultural contexts. Kierkegaard and Carey identify communication as an interactive process in which communicator and audience help each other in the construction of meanings. The interaction between the communicator and the audience is essential not only to maintain the ritual order of other social processes but also to make it an effective and growth-oriented process. This perspective sees communication as an 'interactive process' within the wider social and cultural context in which it occurs.

A. Interactive Process

In this study communication is seen as an interactive cultural process in which communicators and the audience participate in sharing and constructing social and religious meanings. The communicator engages in the audiences' process of communication in order to interact with them. This perspective highlights the role of the audiences in communication even before the message is communicated. Interaction occurs not only in interpersonal and group communication but also at the mass level. Interaction is understood as a process of "linkages between or among countless factors, each functioning conjointly, so that changes in any one set of forces affect the operation of all other processes to produce a unique and total effect" [Sereno & Mortensen 1970:8]. The communicator can often interact more effectively

if he/she is aware of the audience's meaning making, beliefs and worldviews³¹.

Two scholars in the field of communication have identified the significance of this approach. They are McCoroskey [1968] and Schramm [1973] whose work is a study of what happens after the message is communicated. The important features of McCoroskey's model are i. Communication is a circular process. ii. There is a linkage of encoding and decoding to the process prior to (investigation process) and after communication (communication effects). Thus it views encoding and decoding in the social context [McCoroskey 1968:25]. The social and cultural contexts are changing and so are the technologies in the communication process. These changes make communication into an ongoing spiral process which tends to influence other social processes and in turn is being influenced by them.

Schramm's model also visualises communication as a circular process. It has no starting point and no end. It is really endless. It also conceives of decoding and encoding as activities maintained by sender and receiver [1973:31]. Hall's study on 'encoding' and 'decoding' which was noted earlier in the introduction is relevant here. Hall argues:

Events can only be signified within the aural-visual forms of discourse, it is subject to all the complex formal 'rules' by which language signifies. To put it paradoxically, the event must become a 'story' before it can become a communicative event [1980:129].

They put the emphasis mainly the decoding of audiences. They hold the view that decoding takes place when the communicator has communicated his message. They do not recognise the complexities in the process of 'encoding' of the communicator and the 'decoding' of audiences. In the interactive perspective, the process of encoding and decoding does not occur in isolation but within a particular historical

context.

Plude argues that the communication patterns that arise from the new interactive technologies, such as teleconferencing and computers, begin to empower individuals and groups. For her in these Interactive Strategic Alliances, authority seems to move from 'the top' to 'the grass roots' [1994:193]. As already noted in the introduction that her conclusions are derived from the perspective of the contextual necessity which is created by the use of interactive technology in communication. My own research highlights the interactive characteristics of communication from a cultural and religious perspective.

In this interactive approach the communicator is part of an ongoing process. The communicator has to share in the existing media, faith and cultural systems in order to participate in this process together with the audience. The audience already shares these aspects and is also influenced by other processes. By entering into this ongoing process the Christian communicator can come to the place where the audience is. With the support of Carey, Freire and Kierkegaard, this study places the communicator and the audience as participants in the ongoing communication process that occurs within the framework of their social and cultural context.

This interactive perspective is particularly relevant to Christian communication because the communicator is called upon to present the meanings of the gospel in the midst of a wide range of meanings. It is necessary for the Christian communicator to begin from the place where the audience is. One of the best ways of communicating the gospel is to interact with the audience's belief, their means and forms of communication, and worldview. By interacting with the audience, the Christian communicator realises that he/she too is a learner and enables them to

realise the choice that God provides for them.

In Christian communication there is an interaction between the communicator's and the audience's faith and between the media and their social realities. Both are involved in sharing and exchanging their religious understandings and social insights through the media. As it occurs within the particular framework of a society, the communication process reflects and reinforces the world-views and cultural attitudes of the audience. Christian communicators need to be aware of the numerous means of communication that compete for attracting the audience's attention.

In this interactive perspective, Christian communication is seen as part of the cultural process in which the communicator and the audience engage to share and construct meanings that are relevant to their belief and to their social context. It is essential for the Christian communicator to engage in the audiences' communication process because they are exposed to a wide range of meanings (both religious and social) through various processes (e.g. political and cultural). The meanings of the gospel need to be presented effectively among the wide range of meanings using aesthetic characteristics and forms that are familiar to the audience. Examples of the aesthetic forms of communication are the television entertainment programmes such as quiz programmes. In short Christian communicators need to engage in what their audiences share as part of the communication process, in order to interact with them and to present the meanings of the gospel.

B. Biblical Basis

In many biblical narratives, God is shown as one who is engaged in the human communication process in a variety of ways (Heb 1:1). God shares his care and love within the limits of human understanding, and expresses this within the framework of our communicating abilities. At times he conceded to people's demands in order to show them that he participates in their communication process. For example, when the Israelites demanded a King, Yahweh allowed Samuel to anoint a king for them even though he spoke about the dangers of monarchy (1Sam 8:1-22).

Even though the monarchy was seen as a rejection of Yahweh's rule, he is portrayed as one who accepts the demands of Israelites³². While allowing them to have a king, Samuel presents 'the ways of the king' in verse 11. Commenting on this passage (1Sam 8:1-22), Klein [1983:79] notes that by granting Israel a king despite their sins, Yahweh demonstrated his generosity to his people. Yahweh's involvement in his people's lives is thus seen as an interactive participation. In this interactive perspective, there is consideration for the audience's understanding and participation on the same level as that of the communicator, that is God. God and human beings participated in the communication process in which participant tried to understand each other. God is shown as one who continued to interact through the monarchical institution with his people. This clearly highlights the interactive characteristics with which some of the biblical narratives portray God's participation in human communication.

God's involvement is presented in such a way that human beings are able to understand him within their limitations and share his concern through their forms of

communication with others. In this understanding there is a consideration for human interest and aesthetic taste, through which the messages and meanings are shared and exchanged among the participants. Even though the understanding and means do not completely picture or portray God or his activities in an objective way, yet, they attempt to persuade people to experience God's involvement in their lives by participating in this process together with others.

In New Testament times, Jesus interacted in a similar way with his disciples and with his hearers. Some of his parables portray the way in which Jesus interacted with his hearers by sharing their faith, by reflecting their realities and by using their forms of communication. By identifying such an interaction, this study attempts to develop it as a theological model of communication. It can be inferred from the context of the parables that many conflicting and complex beliefs were redefined through these parables. Even though this study tends to apply all the modern understanding of communication to the parables, it does not assume that Jesus was aware of these issues. Analysing many parables would be a long-term project. This study attempts to focus on one of the synoptic parables to derive principles of communication without generalising it to all other parables.

In the next chapter it is demonstrated that Jesus participated in his hearers' communication process by sharing their faith, their forms of communication and their realities through his teaching - particularly through his parables. He sums up his principles of this interactive communication process in one of his kingdom parables (Similes) in Matthew (13:52) by saying, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old". The parable shows the involvement of a scribe who

shares the old with his audience and interprets it in terms of new realities and understanding. This is what is identified as an interaction between old and new forms of communication in which a Christian communicator, like a scribe, is expected to participate. The scribe participates in the ongoing process of communication which is in continuity with the old. The changes in his hearers' contexts demand something new in his involvement in the process of communication.

In a similar way the Christian communicator is called upon to share the religious expressions, characters and forms that are already familiar to his audience (old) and to participate in the communication process by sharing the media with his/her audience in constructing meanings (new). A Christian communicator's interpretation and participation should be shaped and influenced by the changing social and cultural context of the audience. By identifying these principles and encouraging the communicator to participate in an interactive process with his/her audience, this study provides a New Testament model of Communication. This paradigm has two main purposes - to communicate the gospel to the people and to address the ethical issues of communication. The need thus arises to analyse this alternative paradigm through one of the parables of Jesus.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to identify the issues involved in a Christian approach to communication by referring to basic documents of the Church (WCC's reports, WACC's declarations and Pontifical documents on communication). The approaches behind these documents were classified into two categories – instrumental and effect-centred approaches. These approaches viewed

Christian communication from a sender-receiver perspective and identified it as an equivalent of information about God. After identifying their limitations and disadvantages, it was argued that such paradigms were developed on the basis of certain theological assumptions. A need for an alternative approach to communication and for a new theological orientation to support this approach was recognised. An alternative paradigm of Christian communication has been developed from Carey's cultural perspective, leading to a definition of communication as a complex interactive process involving a large number of variables.

This chapter noted Freire's contribution to participatory communication. His analogy of a teacher-student relationship emphasises the importance of creative engagement of the communicator and the audience in the communication process as participants. His emphasis on the liberating aspects of the gospel is relevant to Christian communication in India. In a context where many people are oppressed, the Christian communicators need to interact with the audience in order to bring them out of their oppression and also bring them closer to the gospel. The task of the Christian communicators is not only to liberate suffering people from their oppression but also to bring them closer to God.

In order to develop a theological basis for the interactive approach to Christian communication, reference was made to Kierkegaard's understanding of indirect communication and his emphasis on the role of the audience in this process. Kierkegaard's indirect communication and Carey's cultural perspective were brought together to develop a new perspective in Christian approaches towards communication which was identified as an interactive paradigm of communication. The basic shift in the understanding of communication is to view the communicator

and the audience as active participants in the communication process before and after the message is communicated. In this perspective Christ is seen as an active participant in the communication process in order to interact with human beings. This shift is essential so that Christian communicators might see themselves as part of an ongoing process and become active participants. To participate actively in this process, they have to begin from the state of the audience as Jesus did when he interacted with human beings.

In the continuity of God's interaction, Jesus also tried to draw his listeners into their participation by using metaphors and similes. He interacted with his hearers and used their forms of communication to interpret their faith. His participation showed his concern for the issues in their cultural realities. There is a need to examine this interaction of Jesus with his hearers so that churches and their institutions can be encouraged to adopt this alternative paradigm and its theological basis in their approach to communication. It will be demonstrated that the interaction between Jesus and his hearers was part of the ongoing communication process of first century Palestine. The concrete example of this participation is Jesus' use of parables. This interaction is explicit in certain parables where there is a shared language of faith and social-cultural realities. This points to the value of an analysis on one of the parables of Jesus in order to identify his participation in his hearers' communication process.

The next chapter analyses the way in which Jesus interacted with his hearers in the ongoing process of communication by referring to the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable of the Good Samaritan is chosen because it portrays these interactive characteristics of communication. This analysis aims to establish that the

interactive participation of Jesus, together with his audience, in the process of communication was highly interactive. It is argued that analysing this parable could lead to a new theological orientation. This alternative orientation is developed by identifying the problems of present interpretations and examining their basic theological assumptions. This lends support to the need for an alternative paradigm of Christian communication which is the main purpose of this study.

Chapter 3

Jesus Interacts With His Hearers Through the Parables

1. Introduction

The main task of this chapter is to identify a theological paradigm in the New Testament on which an alternative understanding of communication could be developed. In order to provide an alternative theological framework, this study attempts to interpret Jesus' parables from the theoretical basis developed in the previous chapter. It is intended to demonstrate that Jesus took part in the ongoing process of constructing meanings along with his hearers in the process of communication through parables.

This paradigm sees Jesus as one who interacts with his hearers through their existing beliefs and participates along with human beings in their communication process by using their images, language, forms and meanings. By identifying this interaction in one of the Lukan parables, the present study will demonstrate the necessity for Christian communicators and the churches to consider this alternative approach to communication. Recognition is given to various interpretations of Jesus' parables and their contributions to the theological understanding of the churches, while pointing out their limitations and challenging their hermeneutic approach which assumes a particular understanding of communication.

This chapter demonstrates an implicit presence of the instrumental or of the effect-oriented perspective in some interpretations of the parables. Some interpretations attempt to see in the parable either the original words of Jesus or his context or the context of the evangelists. Some try to illustrate the effect that the content of a parable may have on the hearers. Their interpretations like that of the

effect-centred approach look at the parables and their content for meanings without relating them to their original context. For these interpreters, parables provide information either about the secrets of the kingdom, or about Jesus' nature, or about universal moral principles. These views assume that Jesus used the parables to pass on a particular message or meaning to his audience.

My study argues that Jesus used parables not simply to impart certain information (message or meanings) to his hearers but also to enable them to interpret their beliefs and establish their relationship with God. He used the characters, genre and aesthetic elements that were familiar to his hearers. Some examples of the aesthetic elements in Jesus' parables are embellishment, shock, turns and twists, contrast, numbers, open-ended stories and unexpected endings³³. The aesthetic elements in the parables enable the audience to participate in the interaction by appreciating and enjoying the beauty of the images and stories. From a communication perspective, genres are "cultural media (conventions) which function on levels of linguistic competency beyond the scope of the sentence within every linguistic community" [Petersen 1974:137].

Many of the parables of Jesus reflected contexts and addressed his hearers' social and cultural issues and thus mediated their worldview. Jesus participated in their hermeneutic process and interacted with his hearers' beliefs and worldview through a parabolic form of communication. This interaction between Jesus and his hearers is analysed in my study with reference to a particular parable - the parable of the Good Samaritan because the parable displays these characteristics of communication explicitly in its content and in the context of the dialogue.

As the meaning of the word ‘parable’ and the classification of Jesus’ parables play a vital role in the interpretation, first it is necessary to define the meaning of the word ‘parable’ and to note the different categories of Jesus’ parables as identified by the scholars. This section also identifies the meaning of the word ‘parable’ in terms of its use by the gospel evangelists, and argues that the meanings of parables differ just as the purpose, genre and content vary from one to the other. In the second section of this chapter, the problems of some of the previous interpretations and their assumptions will be noted in order to identify the need for an alternative hermeneutic approach. Finally, there will be an analysis of three characteristics – his hearers’ beliefs, their worldview, and the parabolic medium - that Jesus shared with his hearers in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus and his hearers took part in the construction or mediation of meanings through this parable. In the second part of this section, their engagement in the parable is analysed within the wider process of communication.

A. Defining the Word ‘Parable’

The word ‘parable’ derives from the Greek word παραβολή. One of the meanings of the cognate verb is ‘to cast alongside’ [Sider 1985:1]. This word may imply a comparison or juxtaposition. In classical Greek this word means a simple analogy as opposed to an illustration in the form of λογος [Robinson 1949:93]. This section attempts to define parable on the basis of its use in different literary forms rather than based on its etymological meaning. As the gospels use the Greek word παραβολή to refer to some of the parables of Jesus, this section indicates their use of this word within the Old Testament. The relevant Hebrew noun is māšāl.

The cognate Hebrew verb מָשַׁל (māšāl) means 'to be like'. The word Māšāl is inherently connotative language. There is a need for an interpretation to explore the hidden meanings.

In its long history the meaning of the Hebrew noun מָשַׁל (māšāl) referred not only to comparison but also to popular speech, to the language of wisdom to poetical sayings and later to prophetic speech [Peisker 1971:744-745]. In the Old Testament, the word מָשַׁל (māšāl) is used to designate a proverbial saying (1Sm 10:12), forms of figurative speech such as a riddle (Jdg 14:10-18), a narrative unit (Ezk 17:2-24) or even a taunt song (Mi 2:4) [Young 1989:5]. Thus the word is used with wider reference in the Old Testament. In this sense the use of this word in the Old Testament differs from that of the use of the Greek word in LXX and its classical sense.

The Septuagint (LXX) writers translated word māšāl into παραβολή and used it with its diverse genre (except 'parable proper') and meanings [Robinson 1949:93]. In many instances they substituted another word for māšāl as a form of speech free of analogy (1Ki 9:7 – proverb - ἀφανισμὸν) [Sider 1981:458]. Neither the Greek nor the Hebrew word signifies a specific literary genre. Rather the word 'parable' has a broad signification that is applied to a variety of forms and genres. Scott [1989:21] points out that the synoptic usage corresponds to the Hebrew usage although without its range. In Classical use this word referred to no other form of thought except comparison, but in LXX it is employed in all its meanings of 'analogy' (Ezk 17:2), byword (Ps 44:14), proverb (1Sm 10:12) or taunt (Mic 2:4).

The Old Testament māšāl can provide a background to understand Jesus' use of the parables and synoptic writers' use of this Greek word. Gerhardsson [1988:344-

8] points out that like the Old Testament meshalim, the forms of the New Testament parables were constructed. It can be argued that Jesus' use of 'parables' stood within the wisdom tradition of the מְשָׁלִים [məšālîm]. The word məšālîm refers to narratives that are usually told in the third person, focus on the action of the main character and describe a general situation through fictions [Scott 1989:14]. Even though the genre of məšālîm are well developed in the later rabbinical writings it is possible to identify similar narratives both in the Wisdom literature and in the Prophets. For Bailey, Jesus' parables represent short stories uncharacteristic of the Hebrew scriptures with the possible exception of Nathan's story (2Sm 12:1ff). Thus they definitely stand within the wisdom tradition of the məšālîm [Bailey 1992:106]. The rabbinical use of 'məšālîm' was considerably later than Jesus' time.

The word παραβολή was used in a wide variety of genres at the time of Jesus and of the synoptic writers. It can refer to anything from one-sentence-sayings to short narratives and from clear illustrations to obscure riddles [McGaughy 1992:230]. Mark used παραβολή both in classical and LXX senses. In Mark 13:28 it is to learn from the 'illustration from the fig-tree' whereas in 7:17, it refers to an obscure saying. Matthew develops the Markan use of the word [Robinson 1949:94]. Luke's use is closer to the classical sense except in a few cases (e.g. Lk 4:23). By the time of the gospel writers, this word 'parable' is not simply used to describe a comparison. The synoptic writers used this word to refer to different genres and thus its meanings were determined by its use. It does not necessarily portray Jesus' use of the word nor describe its purpose.

The synoptic writers' use of the word 'parable' and Jesus' use of parables were in line with Jewish contemporaries in that they referred to a wide range of

genres and narrative forms [Sider 1981]. Luke uses the term to describe a proverb (4:23), an allegory (8:11-15), prudential wisdom (14:7-11), a comparison (15:3-7), a brief narrative (19:11-27), and an apocalyptic warning (21:29-33). By the time of Jesus the parables might have been used in different forms including allegories. Their primary role was to capture the attention of the audience and to enable them to interpret and relate their belief to their context. In this sense 'parables' could have been used as hermeneutic forms of religious communication. Various narrative forms of parables have been used to construct, mediate, interpret and communicate certain meanings (cultural and religious) by the Jewish interpreters. Nevertheless there is less evidence to support that Jesus' contemporaries used forms of example stories.

In this study, the narrative of the Good Samaritan is referred to as a 'parable' even though it is in the form of a story. This story brings together three characteristics of parabolic communication: interpreting hearers' beliefs, using characters and plots³⁴ familiar to the hearers, and relating their faith to their social context. Jesus could have used it as a hermeneutic form to interpret the meanings of the word neighbour within the context of the law and the context of the lawyer. Some early interpretations classified parables in various categories which will be noted in the next section.

B. Classification of Jesus' Parables

Classification has become an important factor in the interpretation of the parables. However in order to identify the different characteristics of the interaction between Jesus and his audience parables will be classified under three categories. In this section it will be argued that the parable of the Good Samaritan is more than an

example story. The first interpreter to identify different categories of parable was Jülicher[1899A]. For him “allegories are a succession of metaphors taken from the same sphere and arranged to form a coherent narrative” [1899A:52]. He [1899A:52-59] notes that the parabolic speech of Jesus has two basic units that are ‘metaphor’ (non-literal or indirect form of speech) and ‘simile’ (literal or direct form of speech). He argues that Jesus’ parables are not allegories. Jülicher [1899A:73-97] classifies them as *Die Gleichnisse* (similes), *Die Parabeln* (parables) and *Die Beispielerzählungen* (example stories)³⁵. Fiebig points out that Jülicher imposed Aristotle’s methodology onto Jesus’ parables and avoided any reference to the use of parables in the rabbinical literature [(1876-1949) 1912:119-21]. Even though Jülicher strictly follows Aristotle’s method, his classification of parables has strongly influenced most subsequent interpreters.

After Jülicher, scholars have tried to classify Jesus’ parables according to their purposes and structures. Dodd [1935:16-29] organises the parables under three headings: ‘The Setting in Life’, ‘Parables of Crisis’ and ‘Parables of Growth’ whereas Jeremias [1963:90-96] notes different stages (double parables, collection and fusion of parables) and characteristics of the parables rather than a proper classification. They both accept Jülicher’s distinction between parables and allegories. Crossan [1974b:192] classifies them as parables of advent, reversal, and action. By classifying them into different categories, interpreters have attempted to identify a common genre, narrative form and structure and to compare them with each other’s characteristics and meanings.

In this study it will be argued that each parable in the gospels is unique in itself, even though some of them share a common genre, or purpose, or semiotic

structure. Jesus interacted with his hearers in various ways by taking part in their parabolic communication. Jesus' parables will be classified into three main groups even though the distinctions are not sharply made. The first set of parables enabled him to interact with his hearers' beliefs by sharing and participating in their medium³⁶. The second set of parables helped him to provide social and cultural values³⁷. The third set contained three interactive characteristics of religious communication – the hearers' beliefs, cultural and social issues and the medium³⁸. In these parables, Jesus joined with his hearers in the process of constructing religious meanings not only by sharing and participating in their forms of communication but also by reflecting and addressing the social and cultural issues prevalent at that time. The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the parables in which this interaction is explicit.

'Classifying the Parable of the Good Samaritan'

According to many interpreters after Jülicher, the parable of the Good Samaritan was classified as an example story even though some disagreed with this classification. Jülicher was the first to identify the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example story [1899:115] along with some other parables such as the Rich Fool, the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. For him, an example story has an existential dimension and is like a mirror in which the reader can see a reflection of his own situation [1899:114-117]. Manson [1951:65] identifies the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of the ethical type by arguing that a certain kind of conduct is sketched in a most vivid manner before the audience so that they may apply it to themselves either as an example or as a warning. For Funk

[1966:204], this is not an example-story because the kingdom of God comes to expression in it. Funk rejects the idea that the parable can best be understood in moralistic terms. He regards it as a language event rather than an example story. To comprehend the parable, one must grasp how the hearer is drawn into the story and from what perspective the story is told.

Crossan [1974A:74] finds two points in a parable: a literal point that stems from the surface level of the narrative and a metaphorical point which lives on a much deeper level and appears in a mysterious dialectic with the former point. In distinction to this, an example story works on only one level and has only one point. By including this parable within exemplary stories, the metaphorical challenge has been ignored. Crossan [1974B:192-221] suggests that if this were the case the Samaritan would be in the ditch and the helper would be a Jew. This study agrees with Crossan that the parable contains more than a single literal point. It goes on to suggest that meanings arise from different levels of the story and can vary from hearer to hearer. This study also agrees with Boucher [1977:35] that it is important to analyse the meanings that arise from the parables rather than searching for 'one or many points' in them. In that case it is possible to derive more than one point from the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable is a form of communication through which Jesus and his hearers interact in order to develop meanings for the word 'neighbour'.

Even though in the narrative Jesus asks the lawyer to go and do likewise, he does not simply generalise [not all priests would neglect the injured man] nor idealise the situation [not all Samaritans would help him]. This means that even if the lawyer helps in similar circumstances, it will not eliminate all the problems or stop the

robbers injuring another person. The parable of the Good Samaritan does not provide an ideal situation that can be repeated and does not give a clear answer to the Lawyer's question. The story does not present a simple moral solution to a complex issue, rather it takes one beyond the Samaritan's action and his help. It brings the lawyer to a conclusion that he would not have desired to come to. It indirectly challenges religious authorities to interpret their faith in terms of the realities of life. It also points out the weakness in searching for the objective meaning for religious language. For example in this parable, the question regarding 'eternal life' is answered through a story.

This parable is not merely an example story because it does not demand that the lawyer imitates the situation or that he should become involved in charity work. Rather it demands that the lawyer sees certain meanings of the word 'neighbour' that arise out of the context of the parable that are relevant to his context (as an individual religious person and as an interpreter of the law). The parable creates an imaginary context in which the Samaritan acted as a neighbour rather than the priest or the Levite. The challenge is to find the meaning of the word 'neighbour' in the changing socio-cultural context.

Both Jesus and the lawyer participated and succeeded in developing a wider meaning through this parable. For this reason the parable of the Good Samaritan cannot be considered merely as an example story. It is more than an example story that enables both Jesus, the lawyer and their audience to take part in the search for meanings of the word 'neighbour' that are applicable to their situation. It is a parabolic form of communication through which Jesus interacts with his hearers' beliefs and worldview.

C. Defining 'the Interactive Process' in Jesus' Parables

If 'communication' were understood as an ongoing social process, then the communicator and the audience would take part in this process in order to interact with each other. The parabolic form of communication is part of an interactive and evolving process because Jesus not only shared with his hearers their beliefs, their worldview and their forms of communication, but also participated along with them in the construction of meanings. His participation exploited all the possible ways of interacting with his hearers. He used aesthetic elements in the parables through which he brings the story to his hearers and enables them to participate in the construction of meanings through the story.

Parables enabled Jesus to interact with his hearers at three levels. First, they helped him to interact with their beliefs. That means he shared their beliefs in God and in the law. Jewish scribes and religious teachers had been trying to interpret these beliefs in God and in the law through various means before the time of Jesus. They occasionally used the parables and used a range of sayings and stories. They could be loosely classified as Meshalim. In the same way Jesus tried to interpret these beliefs using characters, narrative forms and everyday incidents in order to enable the hearer to construct his/her own meanings. He started from the place where his hearers were and enabled them to reinterpret their own beliefs through a story. Even though there are limitations to the parables for communicating his message, Jesus used them because his audience shared this form of communication.

Secondly Jesus used the forms of communication such as characters, genre and plots that were familiar to his hearers so that he might participate in their

communication process. The use of characters, special genre, open-ended types, unexpected happenings and so on, enabled the hearers not only to understand the story but to feel the situation created by the story and to play the roles in it from a hearers' perspective. Without using their forms, he might not have been able to enter into the sphere of his hearers. Even though he was part of their social system, he had to be aware of the characters, forms and their meanings that were familiar to his audience.

In order to enable his hearers to participate in this process of communication, he used aesthetic elements in the parables. He had to make a story very attractive to induce people to imagine and play the roles in it. The numbers, reversals, and unexpected twists and turns were some of the strategies that were employed in order to maintain the attention of the hearers. Jesus used familiar characters, aesthetic elements and forms to interact with his audience. This meant he had to begin from a stage where the people could also participate in the construction of the story and its meanings.

Thirdly in some of the parables Jesus addressed implicitly the issues in his hearers' social and cultural contexts. He wanted to interact with their worldview. He did not give an objective understanding of the word 'neighbour' or provide a perfect solution to social problems. In the parables Jesus did not lay down any rules or make generalisations that would persuade his followers or his hearers to obey in order to fulfil the demands of the law regarding neighbours. He took part in his hearers' parabolic communication in order to persuade them to engage in the construction of meanings for the word 'neighbour' and to respond as individuals to meanings that arise out of the parable of the Good Samaritan. He provided a framework with an

imaginative context into which he brought his hearers and participated with them in constructing meanings. He left the choice to his hearers so that they could choose to be a better neighbour than others.

Jesus' hearers were exposed to a variety of religious teachings and beliefs. They were encouraged to consider meanings that would enable them to relate their belief to their context and thus to realise certain values. Through the parables, a variety of meanings were available as options from which to choose. The decision they made would have an effect on both the lives of individuals and of communities. To live in the kingdom of God means to live with higher values which surpass rules and regulations. The ethical issues are addressed through aesthetic elements and in relation to their faith rather than through an objective understanding of the problem or through an ideal solution to such problems.

Jesus' hearers were also influenced by the everyday realities which were constantly changing. There were other influences beside Jesus' teachings that made their choices and meanings more complex. Their responses varied according to their participation in this and in other processes. While interacting through the parables, each person could interpret or understand in different ways. Jesus' basic aim was to take part with his hearers while being aware that the success of his participation would not always be 100 percent³⁹.

It was his continued interacting with his audience that enabled them to participate along with him in parabolic communication and so to construct meanings of religious beliefs. Three levels of communication have to be considered in order to make Christian communication interactive and effective. They provide a Christological basis in which Jesus is seen as a participant in the human

communication process. This chapter will analyse these three characteristics of interaction with a particular reference to the parable of the Good Samaritan and within the wider process of communication in which his hearers were already taking part before him. Before analysing these three levels of communication in the parable of the Good Samaritan the problems of some of the previous interpretations will be noted. Their contributions to this study will be highlighted later in the analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

2. Various Interpretations of Jesus' Parables and Their Assumptions

There is a need to identify the problems of previous interpretations of Jesus' parables because they implicitly support the view of the instrumental or effect-centred approach to communication. Previous interpreters have identified one or other aspect of this process of parabolic communication. Hester [1992] argues that many of the previous interpretations of the parables have assumed a priori that parables are theologically motivated teachings. He notes:

From them, one is supposed to learn what God is like and about Jesus' vision of the coming (eschatological) realm ...Or, we gain insight into our existential situation as humans confronted by the choice of authentic/inauthentic living... Or the parables are supposed to reflect how the Church viewed its place in salvation history [1992: 27-28].

He suggests that the religious themes are present but they are one of many social factors against or within which the parables interact [Hester 1992:28]. The present study agrees with Hester that some of the interpreters try to derive information from the parables and have often disagreed among themselves about the authenticity of the material.

In order to identify this information, the interpreters try to look through the content and the context of the parables. By limiting their focus to religious themes, some of them have not become aware of the contribution of other social processes to the interaction between Jesus and his hearers. To demonstrate the limitations of various interpreters, six main schools of thought are selected for analysis in the following sections: allegorical, one point, eschatological, existential, content and sociological. There are other interpretations but they are not relevant to this study and so are not included in this section.

A. Allegorical

Before Jülicher, the majority of interpreters gave importance to the allegorical meanings of the parables. Boucher [1977:20] defined an allegory as an extended metaphor in a narrative form. The basic issue among the critics of allegorical interpretations was whether Jesus used allegories or not. The secondary issue was whether the allegorical interpretations provided the meanings of Jesus' parables. Blomberg [1991:51-52] strongly argues in favour of the presence of allegories in Jesus' parables [according to him possibly authentic material –Mk 4:13]. There are several reasons to believe that Jesus could have used allegories in his teaching.

First, allegories are found in the Old Testament (e.g. Is 5:1-7). Drury [1985:10-13] identifies them as the enigmatic allegorical parable. Philo himself used a particular form or type of allegorical interpretation of the creation story (Leg All 1:1-5). This points to the use of allegories by the Jewish interpreters at the time of Jesus. Secondly there is a difference between Jesus' use of allegories and allegorical interpretations made prior to Jülicher or at least there are differences between the

way in which a parable was allegorically interpreted in the gospels and the way in which the early church fathers interpreted it.

There is no explicit mention of Jesus' role or of his presence in the allegorical interpretations of the parables in the synoptic gospels⁴⁰. Their main task is to emphasise the importance of accepting God's word. A few instances point to Jesus' claims that his teachings contain the words of God about the kingdom (e.g. Lk 10:21; 8:1). There is an invitation for his hearers to accept his teachings (e.g. Mt 7:24). This does not mean that he was at the centre of his teachings or his presence alone proclaimed the presence of the kingdom.

The synoptic gospels portray Jesus as the one who did not want to put himself explicitly in the centre of his own teachings (Mt 11:1-6; Lk 9:20-21). Rather he wanted God's word and his kingdom to take that place. Some of the early Christian interpreters explicitly placed Jesus at the centre of his own teachings and allegorically interpreted his parables. For Irenaeus, "For Christ is the treasure hid in the field - that is, in this world: for the field is the world: and Christ in the Scriptures is a hidden treasure, because he was indicated by types and parables" (on Mt 13: 44 – *Haer* 4.26) [Keble 1872:384]. Origen confirmed it by saying that the treasure in the field which lies behind and under that which is manifest, is Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge [*Comm on Mt* 10 – in Hanson 1959].

Thirdly there is no direct connection between the allegorical interpretation of the early Christian writers and the context of the hearers in which the parables were told. The point by point interpretation of the sower (Mk 4:14-20) is an exception in the parables of Jesus which reflects his hearers' context. Some of the early Christian interpreters imposed their own context onto the content of the parable [Jeremias

1963:67-89]. In Mark 4:13-20 (||s Mt 13:18-23; Lk 8:11-15), the interpretation of the parable of the sower relates the word of God or of the kingdom to the seed. Those who hear the words and keep them are compared to good soil. This challenge is presented to Jesus' hearers as they hear his words. Augustine compared wayside and stony ground with bad and heretical Christians of his time [*Sermon* 23 - Macmullen 1844:202]. He took the parable away from its context and allegorised it.

There are strong arguments against allegorical interpretations of the parables. They did not give importance to the meanings that arise from the parable within the context of Jesus and his hearers. The allegorical interpreters assumed that Jesus sent the message about the kingdom and its secrets to his hearers through parables. They were not aware of the fact that Jesus interacted with his hearers by sharing their faith, their images and meanings and by reflecting their context. Jülicher [1899] was the first interpreter to point out the problems of the allegorical interpretations. He argues that Jesus' parables were not allegories and that the early church gave the parables allegorical interpretations. He blames the evangelists for regarding the parables as allegories. For him the Parable of the Sower and of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mk 12:1-9) were not genuine parables of Jesus [Jülicher (1899) 1963: 386 & 535].

Dodd highlights the differences between parable and allegory and attributed allegorical interpretations to the evangelists [1935:13-27]. For Jeremias [1963:17-21 & 66], the allegorical interpretation of the parables might have been the result of certain issues arising in the early Christian church (e.g. change of audience, embellishment, translation into Greek). Even though their emphasis was on the point to point comparisons this study recognises the contribution of allegorical interpretations in the search for meaning in the parables.

The meanings of the characters in the parables contribute to the overall meaning/s of the parables in multiple ways. The form of the parable tends to eliminate the secondary meanings of the characters and brings the audience into the main point/s from their own perspective. In the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Mt 18:23-35), though the meanings of the king coincide with meanings of an image of God, the character is used to interpret meanings of the word 'forgiveness'. The parable sets God's forgiveness as a framework of shared belief rather than as a subject of interpretation. The allegorical interpreters (prior to Jülicher) failed to recognise this aspect of the parables. They tried to develop mystical or secret information from the parables rather than to place the parable in the context of Jesus and his hearers. Parables do not merely contain information about God or about Jesus or about the kingdom but are told in a particular context for a particular group of hearers in order to interact with them.

While supporting the presence of allegories in some of Jesus' parables this study argues that not all of these need to be interpreted allegorically. Certainly not all parables can be considered as allegories. Even the kingdom parables need not always be considered as extended metaphors in a narrative form. As the genre and narrative form vary, the methods of interpretation also differ. This study recognises a transition in allegorical interpretations from being theo-centric [Loving God is related to loving one's neighbour - Irenaeus (*Haer* 3.17)] to Christo-centric [the Samaritan is Christ - Augustine⁴¹] and to a mystical interpretation [the return of the Samaritan is like the Second Coming of Christ - Origen⁴²]. Allegorical interpretations were one of the communication forms that the audience shared among them at the time of Jesus.

B. One-point

Jülicher's [1888,1899] one-point interpretation of the parables had a great influence on later scholars. He argues that Jesus constructed his parables in order to convey a universal moral point to his hearers. He does not recognise the fact that Jesus interpreted his hearers' belief and related it to their context through the parables. Though Jülicher recognises different genres, he is not aware of the polysemic characteristics of the characters and place displayed in the parables. Dodd [1935:24-5] points out that Jülicher's method of interpretation reduces the parable to a forcible illustration of eminently sound moral and religious principles, but undeniably its general effect is rather flattening.

Parables do not generalise their meanings to all contexts. Because it is an imaginary context, the parables do not create other generalised images. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, there is no assumption that all priests and Levites would behave in the way the priest and the Levite did in the story [Lk 10:25-37]. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Jesus does not generalise that all rich people would behave in exactly the same way as this rich man [Lk 16:19-31]. Even though it is possible to derive a single dominant meaning from a parable, it is not necessary to generalise that Jesus' hearers understood only this single meaning. For rich people this parable is a call to respond in the same way as the rich man in the story. Poor people like Lazarus are given assurance [Joshva 1998]. For the Pharisees it is a challenge to interpret the law in a different way.

A parable does not picture its imagined context as an ideal one in which the application of this single point eliminates all the problems in that context. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the problem of rich and poor continues to be

the reality which is neither eliminated nor solved, but this issue is addressed in such a way that the rich man is invited to share his richness with poor people like Lazarus. This is one of the meanings that arise from the parable. Against Jülicher, Jeremias [1963:21] argues that parables were not primarily literary productions laying down general maxims. They were delivered in response to an actual situation in the life of Jesus at a particular and often unforeseen point. By giving importance to one moral or universal point, and by emphasising the literary nature of the parables, Jülicher gave importance to their content.

By sharing the parables Jesus and his hearers participated in the construction of meanings for their beliefs and for their lives within their own historical context. Jewish people engaged in such a process of constructing meanings even before the time of Jesus. A wide range of religious, social and cultural meanings were available to Jesus from earlier Jewish traditions. Jesus' intention was not merely to impart a moral point but also to participate with his audience in their search for meanings through the parables.

By joining in their parabolic communication Jesus expected his hearers to engage in the process of constructing meanings of their beliefs. Thus any study of meanings of the parables cannot be limited to their content and thus to a single point. Their meanings arose from Jesus' and his hearers' contexts and from the way in which Jesus interacted with them. The process, in which Jesus and his hearers took part, involved their forms of communication, their context and their beliefs. From the hearers' perspective, there was more than one point as each of their understandings could have been different according to their context, their beliefs and their involvement with Jesus. Even though Dodd and Jeremias follow Jülicher in his case

against allegorical interpretations they shifted the emphasis to Jesus' eschatology by accepting Jülicher's single point interpretation of the parables.

C. Eschatological

Dodd [1935:26] argues that the parables of the kingdom are related to the actual and critical situation in which Jesus and his hearers stood. He identifies two characteristics. The first one is that there is an inward affinity between the natural order and the spiritual order [Dodd 1935:21]. The second characteristic is that the parable entices the hearer to a judgement upon the situation depicts and then challenges him to apply it to his own situation [Dodd 1935:23]. These characteristics identify the interaction between Jesus and his hearers but at the level of their beliefs. In Dodd's study of the parables, the aspect of realised eschatology [the eschatological kingdom proclaimed as present fact⁴³] is emphasised even though not all the parables fit into this category.

Dodd's study is important, as he has shifted the meaning from the content to the context. His claim [1935:44-46] regarding the original sayings of Jesus that they had realised eschatological belief is an attempt to impose his own understanding on the parables. Even though there are instances where Jesus associated his presence with the kingdom, yet he was not directly placing himself at the centre of its understanding. My study argues that Jesus' parables not only enabled the audience to interpret belief in the kingdom but also addressed social and cultural issues arising out of their context. They offered a hermeneutic model for the interpreters of that time. Jesus participated in the ongoing search for meanings of the kingdom together with his hearers by using their medium and their beliefs. He wished to persuade them

to see themselves in the message of the kingdom and their relationship with God, rather than to see him in the message. Having become one with the message through his life, it becomes natural for his followers to interpret his words by placing him at the centre of his message.

Another factor is that Jeremias [1963:21] criticises Dodd for emphasising the one-sided nature of the kingdom. He recognises the presence of future characteristics in some of the parables of Jesus. For Jeremias the primitive church saw itself between two crises, the cross and the Parousia and actualised the eschatological content by stressing the necessity for reconciliation. Here Jeremias' study must be noted for pointing out the importance of the change of the situation and the new meanings arising out of the changes among Jesus' followers and the early church. He argues that the church found itself forced by the altered conditions to interpret those parables of Jesus. For him the parables were originally intended to arouse the crowd to a sense of the gravity of the moment. By interpreting them as directions for the conduct of the Christian community, the early Christian church shifted the emphasis from the eschatological to the hortatory interpretation [1963:44]. This is an over-generalisation of the development of the parables with reference to their context because there are other crises that would have contributed to their use.

With his ten classic laws, Jeremias has certainly shown the process by which the parables could have evolved. Sider [1983:61-3] is right in pointing out the problems of deduction from these postulates in order to trace the original sayings of Jesus. Yet Jeremias' postulates are very helpful in identifying some of the aspects of interactive communication. By pointing out the changes that could have occurred due to the change of audience and due to the hortatory use, he demonstrates the meanings

that arose from the settings in which Jesus spoke the parables [Jeremias 1963:33-48]. His interpretation of the parables explores the meanings that arose from the audience's context. He does not recognise the diversity of the audience among Jesus' hearers; rather the change of audience is due to the spread of the gospel to a different audience after Jesus' time. His study features only one set of meanings that arose from the context of the early Christian audience. The participation of the hearers in the construction of meanings and their reading of themselves in relation to the kingdom are more important than the actual phrase 'kingdom' and its use in Jesus' teachings. It is difficult to trace the exact ways in which the audience derived their meanings while interacting with Jesus through parables.

Both Dodd and Jeremias search for the original meaning of the parable in the *sitz im leben*⁴⁴ of Jesus and of the evangelists. By looking through the parable and its context they attempt to identify the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. For them parables are sources of information about Jesus' original words which interpreted the eschatological faith of his hearers. The present study argues that it is not necessary to view the parables merely as sources of the original sayings of Jesus or simply as a means of interpreting the eschatological beliefs of his hearers. Through the parables Jesus addressed the social issues in the light of religious beliefs and interpreted religious beliefs in the light of changing social contexts. In each parable the crisis, belief and genre varies in a way that cannot be generalised to all.

According to Dodd and Jeremias, Jesus sent the message of the kingdom to his hearers through the parables. It was Jesus' hearers who remembered his words and handed them down to the next generation through the oral tradition. The evangelists recreated them in the light of their changing context and wrote them

down for their readers with an interpretation. However it is necessary to see the interaction between Jesus and his hearers within the wider context of his teachings and that of his contemporaries. This interaction occurred at different levels, some of which were recorded in the gospels. Dodd and Jeremias identified two main aspects of parabolic communication: the relationship of the content with the contexts and the audience's possible interaction with the content. Even though they could not identify the exact words of Jesus, they traced the process in which the content of the parables might have evolved.

Having emphasised the eschatological aspect of the parables, Dodd and Jeremias tend to neglect Jesus' interaction with his hearers' worldview through the parables. As Jesus engaged along with his hearers in the ongoing process of interpretation, he interacted not only with their beliefs, but also with their worldview and their forms of communication which are part of the whole process of parabolic communication. It is essential to study the parables within the context of this ongoing process.

D. Existential

Those who followed this perspective argue that the parable is an art form and confronts the listener existentially. The parables should be interpreted in existential terms [Jones 1964:166]. In his study, Wilder [1982] emphasises the importance of the study on the form and structure of the parables with an existential dimension. Wilder and Jones search for a wider application of the parables and emphasise the literary characteristics in summoning the hearers to a decision. Yet they claim that their studies on the parables are not merely existential interpretations. Wilder points

out that Jesus' parables should be understood in relation to the speaker and the occasion; not in connection with his titles, but in relation to his way and his goal [1982:85].

Fuchs argues that the parables were language events [Sprachereignisse] and through them Jesus brought his understanding of his situation before God and in the world [Kissinger 1979:182]. After being critical of Fuchs⁴⁵, Wilder pleads for recognition of the socio-cultural determination of the texts and their language [1982:28]. He desires to identify the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus using the criteria of the form. Wilder sees Jesus as a teacher and as an artist who brought together his eschatological sayings with his humanistic concept achieving an aesthetic balance [1982:79-80]. For Wilder the parables represent a unique fusion of theological and moral mystery combining ordinariness, naturalness and secularity.

In Wilder's understanding, the hearer not only learns about the reality but also participates in it. He searches to establish a relationship between the one who spoke the parables and the text. He is right in pointing out that the relationship between eschatological imagery and layman's language is established by the aesthetic balance. My study recognises the fact that Jesus' parables are not merely motivating stories even though they have the characteristic of compelling imagination, of spell, of mythical shock and transformation. It should be noted that the parables not only reflected the everyday reality of his hearers but also interpreted their belief and related it to their context. Jesus' parables mediated everyday reality in order to enable the hearers to read themselves in them. Mediating and addressing the realities of the hearers' context were part of the ongoing communication process in which they (Jesus and his hearers) took part in a search for meanings through the parables.

For Jones, parables mediated revelatory truth and become authoritative because of the person who told them [Jones 1964:160]. They are art forms that offer expanding possibilities of impact on the mind and imagination with a recreative and seminal potency. He argues that because the parables provided a statement about or a criticism of life, dealing with concrete conditions of existence at any time, their interpretation needed to be extended by removing them from their particular context [1964:161-3]. This method of communication does not involve a direct attack or an unambiguous judgement. It is presented in a manner which gives to it a significant reality, and achieves immeasurably more than a formulated code of religious regulations or rules.

By recognising Jesus' parables as artistic forms and by emphasising their purpose as summoning the hearers to a decision, Jones showed the importance of the parabolic medium without reference to its context. The existential interpretation of the parables focuses on the interaction between the content and the audience without considering the author of the content, and the possible meanings that arise the original context and thus limits the study to one aspect of the interaction between Jesus and his hearers.

Rather than considering the content of a parable in isolation, it should be analysed within the context of the ongoing process of communication in which Jesus and his followers participated. While the meanings arise from the audience or from the listeners, the context, the content and the communicator also contribute to the construction of meanings. This interactive approach points out that meanings at different times arise from the content, or from the audience or from the communicator or from their context. Thus the primary task is to demonstrate the way

in which Jesus enabled his hearers to recognise certain meanings through the parable that were relevant to them.

E. Content/Structural

Crossan, Via and Funk focus on the structure of the parables and their narrative in order to develop their meanings. For them the meanings of the parable can be derived from the structure of its content. Wilder points out that structuralism involves an “understanding of the biblical texts and styles on the one hand to their poetic, as illumined by contemporary investigation of literary forms, and (on the other hand) to their semantic, involving the dimension of communication or speech event” [1974:12]. Crossan [1974B:193] argues that without establishing the exact content of Jesus’ words in the parables, no structural analysis was possible. For him the content of the parable as a self-contained structure possesses meanings [1974B:192]. He notes that many parable-like stories could be portrayed structurally as a clash between hearers and speaker along the axis of communication [1974A:87-95].

Crossan [1973:21-22] points out the relationship between Jesus’ experience of God and his expression of the kingdom through parables. Even though he relates the content to the historical context of Jesus, his structural analysis does not consider the role of Jesus’ hearers and their context in the construction of the content of the parables. Crossan argues that the parable as a metaphor contains a new possibility of world and language so that any information one might obtain from it can be received after one has participated in the metaphor in its new and alien referential world

[1973:13]. For him the participation and the information flow after the hearer has entered into it and experienced it from inside.

It is true that the meaning evolves from the experience of the hearers while they participate in the story. At the same time the story expects the hearer to know its characters, its beliefs, expressions, forms of communication and worldview. Without sharing these aspects, neither the communicator nor the audience can interact with the parable and its meanings. For example the hearer had to know who a Samaritan was and also be aware of the cultural meaning of his character in order to understand the parable of the Good Samaritan. Without this knowledge the parable of the Good Samaritan would not make much sense to the hearer.

Even before the parable was told these elements of parabolic communication must have been familiar to the participants in the process of communication. Otherwise the parable would make no sense at all. Crossan [1974] argues that the internal dynamism of the story and the historical situation of Jesus' day agree that the literal point of the story challenges the hearer to put together two impossible and contradictory words for the same person: Samaritan (Lk 10:33) and neighbour (Lk 10:36). If the meaning that arises from the structure of the parable and the meaning that arises from the historical context at the time of Jesus are the same, then the parable could be attributed to the historical Jesus [Crossan 1974A:63].

In Crossan's model Jesus is seen as the one who sends literal and metaphorical points through the structure of the parable to his hearers. The metaphorical point brings the kingdom of God abruptly into a person's consciousness and demands the overturn of prior values and established conclusions. This point requires the hearers to participate in the construction of meanings by stating the

contradictory, the impossible and the unspeakable [Crossan 1974A:76]. Coming from diverse Jewish groups, Jesus' hearers must have understood the parable in a number of ways. For some the meaning arises from the content, but for some it arises from the overall teachings and life of Jesus. Crossan did not recognise the fact that even before sending this message Jesus had to share his hearers' beliefs, expressions, forms of communication and worldview in order to interact with them. Thus, it is essential to place the parable within the ongoing processes even though it is difficult to trace the historical event in which it was told or the original words of Jesus.

Via [1974] identifies a parable as a story⁴⁶ and not as a discourse. He studies the parables by focusing on their plots and actants. His interpretation employs modern literary critical tools in order to trace the existential values contained in the parables' content. A plot is a sequential unity (coherence in opening, maintaining and closing the sequence) of the narrative whereas an actant is a function, role, or status whose quality is to be the subject of or participant in a constant action [Via 1974:107]. He is critical of Crossan for not recognising the autonomy of the story. For him, parables are aesthetic objects, carefully organised and self-contained. He wants the parables to be interpreted without relating them to their historical context [1967:95-101]. Even though parables propose certain values in their structure, they do not present them as universal moral or existential values. His interpretation focuses on the possible interaction between a modern reader and the content rather than Jesus and his hearers. In relation to the parable of the Good Samaritan he argues that Jesus communicated to the lawyer from his own understanding of the meaning of neighbour [1974:113]. Taking the parable away from its context and making it into a universal story provides a possibility of exploring more meanings. It does not

provide a holistic approach to the understanding of the parables because they do not carry information in themselves. The parabolic form of communication enables the communicator and the audience to enter into an imaginary context to search for meanings. These meanings guide them to interpret and relate their belief to their context.

Funk [1974B:51] analyses the structure of the parables with reference to three principal participants. His three participants are Determiner (that with respect to which some response is made; the axis on which the narrative turns); Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 (opposing or contrasting responses). Funk [1974C:76] states:

The parable does not involve a transfer of information or ideas about an established world from one head to another. Both the narrator and the auditor participate and venture its outcome. He or they do not tell the story; it tells them.

He recognises the audience as active participants in the construction of meanings of the parables. Even though Funk identify polysemic characteristics in the content of the parables, he focuses on the audience's participation in the construction of meaning [1974C:80]. He sees the parables as language events in which the hearer has to choose between two worlds. He resorts to the dichotomy between everydayness and the unusual as a key to understanding the parable [Funk 1966:203]. For him the parable as a metaphor gives itself existentially to unfinished reality. This is unfinished until the hearer is drawn into it as a participant.

As the hearers are drawn into the drama, the meaning of the kingdom comes from the parable as a surprise. It resists ideational crystallisation [Funk 1966:221]. Funk identifies the communicator and the audience as participants in the construction of content and its meanings while the parable was being communicated [1974C:76].

He has not mentioned the role of the audiences as effective participants in the construction of the parable, before it was communicated to them. If Jesus had not recognised the parable as a form familiar to his hearers, he could have not used it.

The meaning that identifies a good neighbour is not a new one to Jesus' hearers. At a time when Jews hated Samaritans it was through the parable that Jesus could show a Samaritan in a good light. Even before the parable was communicated, Jesus and his hearers shared the ongoing search for meanings that arose out of their context. Even before Jesus told the parable, the audience was engaged in the search for the meanings in which Jesus participated in order to enable them to be aware of this understanding. By pointing to the content alone, the holistic meaning of the parable cannot be deduced, though it does serve to highlight one set of meanings.

These studies [Via and Funk] argue that the content of the parables could have universal application apart from their particular context. In my study it is argued that Jesus and his audience lived in a particular historical and cultural context in which they had to face certain realities such as poverty and social conflicts. These realities forced them to search for meanings to accommodate themselves to the changing context. Within this historical framework, Jesus' parables provided the best possible way to evolve new meanings by engaging with his hearers. Without placing them in their historical context, Jesus' parables would be nothing more than ancient stories that were used to motivate and socialise people into particular cultural systems.

F. Sociological

Some interpreters have focused on the social and cultural meanings of the parables. Theissen, Malina and Neyrey raise the question of the impact of the changing social and cultural situations on the content of the gospels. By pointing out four factors: the socio-economic, socio-ecological, socio-political, and socio-cultural, Theissen [1978A & B] argues that the Jesus' movement was influenced by the changes in society at that time. These issues are recognised by Scott [1989:98] who states, "Throughout all these parables of "Family, Village, City and beyond," the social landscape has furnished a map that is expected to replicate the kingdom of God. Understanding that map is a key to understanding the parables".

Scott [1989] finds it important to recognise the social and cultural setting in which the parable was told. He divides parables into three groups based on the sociological models. The first group employs the horizontal structure of society, the map of the world of social relations used to identify insiders and outsiders. The second group exhibits the vertical or hierarchical pattern of society in which the patron-client is assumed to be the primary way of organising social interchange in the ancient world. The third group portrays the artefacts of everyday life that are subsumed into the world of the parable [Scott 1989:420-1]. My study agrees with Scott that meanings evolve from the social and cultural interaction. It is essential to recognise the fact that the context of this interaction certainly set the framework for developing meanings.

In the Socio-Rhetorical study of the parables, Hester [1992:28] suggests that even though religious themes were present, they were but one of many different

social factors against or within which the parables interact. By pointing out the audience's different social and historical contexts, he argues that they interpreted the stories in a number of ways. His study certainly notes the contribution of the context of audiences in their construction of meanings for the parables. Riches points out that [1990:247] the changes in Israel's circumstances substantially affected the expectations that have been traditionally associated with certain terms and beliefs.

The necessity of extending the meaning of the word 'neighbour' could have come out of the hearers' context of an emerging multicultural society. It was already pointed out that without the context of enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans, the parable of the Good Samaritan would not make any sense. Similarly without an experience of the rich and poor, Jesus would not have told the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The content and its meanings arose out of the context in which the community of Jesus' hearers lived. While using the sociological methodologies, the complexity in the relationship between the text and the context should be recognised.

Only a few authors [e.g. Philips 1985] have done the Post-Structural analysis of the parables. In his study, Philip attempts to note the role of the reader as an active participant in the construction of texts. For him [1985:136],

textual production is an effort to win, to exert interpretative power and control by entering into the tradition's dialogues, engaging in arguments, using its images and literary texts in order to bring from out of the tradition the older elements of the tradition so that the tradition can come alive in a new way and address the present believing community in a way that counts.

Philip gives importance to the role of the writer more than to the role of Jesus' audience in this process. My study recognises the importance of the audience's role in the ongoing unfolding process of revelation and in the construction of the meaning of this revelation to their contexts through parables.

The meanings of the parables do not merely flow from the content or from the communicator to the audience but arise out of the necessity of their context. However, the parables should not be considered purely as a response to the need of society, even though it was important for Jesus or his followers to reflect and address these needs and thus to join with the people in their search for meanings. The meaning of the parable cannot be derived simply from its content or from the context of Jesus but must include the context of the audience and the overall context of interaction between Jesus and his hearers.

Many variables such as audiences, their context, their perceptions of Jesus as well as the structure and plot need to be taken into account when identifying the meanings of the parables. In such cases the interpreter can trace the way in which these meanings might evolve. The parables were not used to convey or create any one particular meaning to the hearers but rather to highlight meanings by bringing them to the attention of each individual. His hearers construct their own meanings from the parable, yet Jesus wanted them to recognise certain meanings that are relevant to their context.

By looking at Jesus' participation in his hearers' ongoing search for the meaning of the revelation, an attempt is made to determine their role even before the parable was told to them. It can be argued that the parables might reflect and address the issues that arose not only from the context in which Jesus told them but also from the context of early Christians. Even though it is difficult to point out exactly the context (i.e. the context of Jesus' hearers, or the context of the evangelists' readers in which this necessity arises) yet the parable portrays the process in which it evolved.

G. Interpretations and Communication Approaches

I have selected a few New Testament scholars in order to show that their interpretations are largely developed on the instrumental and effect-centred approaches of communication. These interpretations viewed the parable as a medium which was used by Jesus to send a particular message to his audience. Most of them assume that the parables contain moral and universal values. In the instrumental view of communication Jesus sends information to his hearers through parables. Even though there is no direct link between these interpretations and the church documents that are studied in the previous chapter, my study points out the influence of the instrumental view in the interpretations of the parables.

The allegorical interpreters assumed that the parables contain secret information about the kingdom, about God or about the nature of Jesus. Jeremias and Dodd confine this information to a single point and attempt to trace the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus through the content of the parable. They view Jesus' parables as instruments either to trace the original words or the context of Jesus. By placing the parables in their context, they succeeded in showing the meanings that arose from their context, even though their studies are limited to their eschatological meanings.

Like the effect-centred approach, some of these interpretations assume that the content of the parables contained an absolute answer to the problems that they addressed. Because of this understanding Jülicher seeks to trace a single point that was a universal moral point. Recognising this moral point could lead one to follow it as a rule for the Christian life. Many similar rules could be derived from the parables and from the teachings of Jesus.

Through the parables Jesus did not provide rules and regulations for his hearers but interacted with them in order to bring them closer to God. Wilder and Jones interpret them as an aesthetic means aimed at bringing the hearers in to a state of existential understanding. They search for the existential meaning of the parables in which Jesus combined art and information together in order to enable the hearer to read himself/herself into the content. Their interest is mainly in the content of the parables and their form. It can be argued that there is no single existential understanding that can be derived from the parables.

Some scholars like Via and Funk interpret the content of the parables without any reference to historical context by analysing their structure. In this understanding Jesus constructed the content of the parables in order to invite his hearers to listen and be challenged. The structural interpreters view the content as a means for Jesus to convey his existential meanings to his hearers. By taking the content away from the context, the structural interpreters identify the existential values within the structure of the parables and turn them into Christian principles. These interpretations turn the parable into an effective source of information about Jesus' ethical and universal values.

Both the interpretations and the church documents are very similar in understanding Jesus' communication to his hearers. For them Jesus is a sender and people are receivers. They view Jesus as one who sent information to his hearers. This information is seen to provide all the answers to human problems. Having received this information the churches are expected to pass it on to their audience. Some of these interpretations assume that certain moral and universal values derived from the parables, can be generalised to all contexts.

In the cultural understanding, Jesus is seen as one who participates in the communication process of his hearers. His hearers might have interpreted the parables in various ways. For some the meaning would arise from the content of the parable, for some from the overall context of Jesus' teachings [the lawyer calls Jesus 'teacher' – Jesus was already known as teacher] and for others from their own context. Through his parables Jesus attempted to interpret certain expressions that are related to particular Jewish beliefs. These expressions have a wide range of meanings. The parable itself highlighted some of these meanings. Jesus' hearers could have understood the stories from their own perspective.

It was essential for Jesus to participate and interact with his hearers providing his own meanings among this wide range of meanings. In my understanding Jesus did not use the parable as an instrument to inform his hearers about the kingdom or about God or his nature. He did not impart information that contains an absolute answer to all problems. Even though the parables did not interpret these expressions and their meanings in a perfect way, and did not even convince all his hearers, Jesus used them in order to engage with his hearers in their communication process. That is why the interactive understanding of communication could provide a holistic view of the parables.

3. Interactive Characteristics of the Parables

The previous section demonstrates the limitations of certain interpretations of the parables. This present study emphasises the interactive characteristic of communication through parables. This interactive perspective defines parabolic communication as an ongoing process in which Jesus and his hearers engaged by

sharing beliefs, parabolic forms and worldview. Some of the gospel parables portray three characteristic of this interactive process of communication. First Jesus interpreted his hearers' beliefs, secondly he used the parabolic form of communication and thirdly his parables reflected and addressed his hearers' context. In the parable of the Good Samaritan these three characteristics of the interactive communication process will be identified.

The first aspect is that Jesus and his hearers engaged in an ongoing hermeneutic process in order to interpret their beliefs. This process is the ongoing process in which people's beliefs are interpreted through various methods of communication. Jesus' use of the parables was part of this process. The purpose of Jesus' participation was to develop meanings of certain expressions of their belief such as the kingdom of God, eternal life, prayer, and parousia⁴⁷. In order to share and interpret their religious expressions Jewish interpreters and audiences, both before and during the time of Jesus, participated in this process. Westermann [1990:3] points to the existence of three forms of comparison in the Old Testament - a brief narrative, single sentence, one word. Thus the parabolic interpretation was developed in multiple forms and was preserved both in oral and written traditions. It clearly portrays Jesus' willingness to participate in the ongoing hermeneutic process by using the parables.

The second aspect of this interactive process is the use of the aesthetic elements in the parables. Jesus captured and maintained the attention of his hearers by sharing aesthetic elements in the parables. These elements of the parables encourage the audience to participate along with the communicator in the hermeneutic process. They provide attractive and entertaining aspects in order to

capture and maintain attention. A sensational story like the parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mt 21:33-46; Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-19) not only maintained the attention of the audience -particularly chief priests and the Pharisees – Mt 21:45) but also enabled them to identify themselves with the character of the tenants. Using sensational images and aesthetic forms, parables display and challenge the audience's faith. They lead the audience to act out the roles in their imagination. By sharing the audience's characters, settings and forms, the parables display their taste and interests and help them to become active participants in the construction of meanings.

The third aspect of the interaction is that Jesus' parables were told within a particular context. Thus their content reflected the context of the hearers and attempted implicitly or explicitly to address the social and cultural issues of the time. By using contemporary characters and situations and by addressing social issues, parables mediated meanings between Jesus and his hearers. Dodd identifies these images as the realism of the parables [1935:21]. In the parable of the Lost Sheep, the image of the shepherd was a familiar one (Mt 18:12-14 and Lk 15:3-7). In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the issue of the disparity of wealth between the rich and the poor in the context of the hearers is reflected and addressed (Lk 16:19-31).

These three aspects of communication were explicitly present in some parables through which Jesus interacted with his hearers⁴⁸. Some of the earlier interpretations were examined in the previous section of this study in order to show their limitations. The presence of these three aspects of parabolic communication in the teachings of Jesus, and in other contemporary texts will be established in the study in order to point out that the audience was already aware of them. Reasons will

also be given for selecting the parable of the Good Samaritan. The following section will analyse the characteristics in the parables of Jesus.

A. Hermeneutic Process

The Synoptic gospels show that Jesus interacted with his audience's beliefs through parables which not only mediated his hearers' beliefs and worldview but also encouraged participation in the ongoing hermeneutic process⁴⁹. The parables did not simply convey a package of information. This means that they did not reveal the nature of the other world but interpreted beliefs in the kingdom. Jesus might have constructed some of the parables in order to interact with his hearers, but in doing this he had to share forms and images with his audience as other interpreters had done before him.

One of the characteristics of this hermeneutic process is that the participants [Jesus and his audience] had to share and interpret their beliefs in order to engage in this process. Jesus' hearers might have been already aware of different meanings and belief that are associated with the words such as 'kingdom'. Dodd [1935:34-43] and Jeremias [1963:31-33] argue that Jesus interpreted the meaning of the kingdom through the parables. Dodd [1935:35-7] refers to the Old Testament texts and other Inter Testamental books in order to demonstrate two streams of understanding regarding the kingdom of God.

Dodd's emphasis on realised eschatology points to one stream of this hermeneutic process. There is a possibility that those who were part of this stream [among the hearers] might have understood in this way. However it would be wrong to generalise the hermeneutic process and to limit Jesus' interpretation and the

audience's understanding to this single perspective of the kingdom. Their analyses of the parables rightly showed that Jesus shared and interacted with his hearers' beliefs about the kingdom.

Some of the studies on Jesus' parables attempt to identify the process by which they were developed. Dodd finds it difficult to see how Jesus could hold two apparently divergent views of the kingdom at the same time. The gospel parables portray Jesus as one who wants the audience to realise the presence of the kingdom in his ministry and also as one who displays its future characteristics. My study agrees with Dodd [1935:119] that a parable like the parable of the Prodigal Son has an implicit reference to Jesus' ministry and the presence of the kingdom in a realised form. It is difficult to accept his assumption that the Parousia parables were interpreted versions of the early church [Dodd 1935:135].

Jesus' teachings might have reflected both views of the kingdom in his parables because his audience held differing views. Dodd [1935:34-44] identifies different views among contemporary texts, e.g. as present fact - to submit oneself to the law is to take upon oneself the yoke of heaven, and in terms of future - may he establish his kingdom (Mt 6:9). Jesus interacted not only with his hearers' belief in the kingdom of God but also with other expressions of their faith such as God's forgiveness (the Unmerciful Servant – Mt 18:23-35), the law (the Good Samaritan – Lk 10:30-37), prayer (the Friend at Midnight – Lk 11:5-8), life after death (the Rich Man and Lazarus – Lk 16:19-31) and future judgement (the Talents - Lk 19:12-27). These expressions need not be interpreted within the understanding of the kingdom.

Jesus' audience might have been aware of these expressions and their meanings⁵⁰. For example Philo talks about 'Hades' (Congr 57; Rer Div Her 45) and

about the commandments (Decal 1.1-2). There are other instances in which some of these expressions were interpreted through certain parables. Jesus, like other Jewish religious teachers, not only shared his hearers' beliefs but also enabled them to interpret their beliefs through parables. In Luke 11:5-8 and 18:2-8 Jesus interacted with the belief of his hearers about prayer. He found a need to interpret this belief in order to emphasise the necessity of continued prayer [Hendrickx 1983:215]. He shared his hearers' belief in prayer.

In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus there is an attempt to interpret the belief in life after death. The word 'Hades' as an equivalent of Sheol (שְׁאוֹל) in the Old Testament signifies the dark place (Job 26:5) and the place to which everyone is consigned indiscriminately (Ps 89:48-9). In Enoch 22 this word Sheol refers to a geographical division of the area separating the souls of men. Jesus' audience might have been aware of the significance of this word 'Hades' or its equivalent and also of the divisions in their social context based on the economic conditions of the people⁵¹. These examples and their references show that Jesus and his hearers shared certain beliefs that are associated with these religious expressions.

B. The Use of the Aesthetic Elements

Jesus enabled his hearers to participate in the hermeneutic process by introducing aesthetic characteristics to the parables. He attracted their attention through his use of aesthetic elements – such as familiar characters, forms and genres in the parables. The hearers were already aware of some of these characters and forms. The later Jewish interpreters used a similar technique [Stern 1991:8f]. While interpreting their beliefs, he entertained them by adopting these aesthetic elements.

As people had already experienced these with other interpreters, they could readily engage with Jesus in this process. The aesthetic aspect of the parables enabled Jesus to capture the attention of the audience and to interpret their religious beliefs.

i. Using Familiar Characters

First Jesus interacted with his hearers using familiar characters (such as a priest or king) and familiar narrative forms as well as using contemporary events or incidents. By displaying the characters, situations and forms which can capture and maintain the attention of the audience, Jesus enabled them to engage in the hermeneutic process along with him (Lk 15:8-10 - lost coin; Mt 20:1-16 - servant wages). It is essential to recognise the fact that Jesus and his hearers were aware of the characters used in the parables and their meanings. For example, Jesus drew symbols and characters from nature and from human society such as mustard seed (Mk 4:31), leaven (Mt 13:33), lost coin (Lk 15:8) and denarius (Mt 20:2) and political characters such as king (Mt 22:2-14). Scott [1989:374-375] points out that not only did the audience know these characters but also meanings similar to them were available from later texts such as in those in the Mishnah (M Kil 3.2).

Many Jewish interpreters used contemporary characters and situations in their communication (e.g. Image of a mercy seat in Philo's writings – Qin Ex 2.60-68; image of a light in 2Es 2:35, Tob 10:5; Wis 5:6;). Westermann's systematic study of the Old and New Testaments shows that in both testaments there are narratives that portray the transition from comparison to parable [1990:152]. Cathcart [1995:214] notes the presence of acting figures such as trees, animals and birds in the Old

Testament parables. Particularly at the time of Jesus this transition was occurring on a large scale.

Young [1989:207] points out the relationship between the image of the mustard seed and its proverbial smallness which Jesus exploited in his parable. Young records the similarity between the imagery of the mustard seed in the parable and the tree in Daniel (4:11). He also notices that the Halakhic issues related to the planting of mustard seed in the garden and in the field and are not related to the imagery in the parable [1989:206-7]. It can be argued that Jesus used these popular images and forms in order to interact with his hearers. Jesus chose to use these characters or events even though they did not perfectly interpret his audience's beliefs.

The characters and their roles in the parables carried cultural, social and religious meanings. These meanings might have provided a means of capturing the attention of the hearers and could have enabled them to play different roles within the parable. When the religious beliefs were interpreted through this parable the hearers could interact with the story and construct their own meanings in the light of the understanding of the kingdom.

ii. Using Contemporary Forms

Secondly Jesus shared his hearers' forms of communication and used them in order to encourage his hearers to participate in discursive form of communication. Borsch [1988:1] notes that the parables were designed to lure the hearers to become participants and invite them to play several roles. He highlights the characteristics of

the parabolic stories that enabled hearers to realise the extraordinary in the context of the ordinary. He notes:

By looking and listening beneath the surfaces of human life one discovers that ordinary decisions and actions are often fraught with all manner of unexpected consequence... The brevity of the story ...leaves space for allusion and imagination to interact and be at play [1988:15].

It is essential to widen Borsch's argument by placing parables in the ongoing process of communication in which Jesus and his hearers engaged. Their interaction occurred within a particular cultural and historical framework. The purpose of using aesthetic elements was not merely to entertain the audience but to interact with their belief and worldview.

Jesus' parables helped the audience to imagine and play the roles in the story and thus interpreted their beliefs. Jesus took part in his hearers' communication by attracting them to the story and by allowing them to create their own social and religious meanings. By identifying different forms in Jesus' parables, Stein [1978:7-33] argues that in a storytelling culture, they sought to describe the arrival of the kingdom of God through stories. It is argued that Jesus engaged in his hearers' search for meanings by using their images and stories and by reconstructing them into his own parables. In the parable of the Great Supper⁵² (Lk 14:15-24; Mt 22:1-14 and G Th 64.) Jesus described a feast or a banquet. The characters such as servants, feast, and high street beggars are used to construct an imaginary situation in which the genre and story form place the characters in a different dramatic action.

In the Old Testament some of the prophets used similar genre and forms [2Sm 12:1ff, Is 5:1-3 and Ecc 9:13-16]. Jesus' hearers might have been familiar with the characters and form of the stories in the Old Testament which were interwoven

with aesthetic elements. In the earlier prophets the story of a king and the woman of Teko'a is a good example of using aesthetic elements in communication (2 Sm 14:1-7). This woman tells him a story which uses familiar characters, genre that can bring the listener into its context and mediates the contemporary social issues. The later prophets (e.g. Is 28:23-25 and Jr 18:1-6) use such aspects of communication. This is primarily to show that people were accustomed to this style of story telling and its mediating role between their beliefs and their contexts. In the Old Testament many narratives that described historical events contained aesthetic elements [e.g. the narratives in the book of Esther and in the book of Job].

In the Inter Testamental writings there are references to parabolic forms and comparisons during this period⁵³. During the Inter Testamental period, the Old Testament narratives were interpreted by using aesthetic elements and with additional descriptions⁵⁴. Vander Kam [1981:70] concludes that the synoptic stories drew their inspiration from the Inter Testamental pronouncement stories which share common traits among them. The practice of using aesthetic elements that mediated people's beliefs and context was already known to the Jewish interpreters and to the people. Greenspoon [1981:76] argues that Philo included the pronouncement stories that were circulating through the Greek world (e.g. Cher 63; Plant 65). Josephus composed these stories by himself, related them to the historical narratives and interpreted them from his religious viewpoint (BJ 4.460-65 – Elisha's story & 6.409-411). Greenspoon [1981:77] comments:

Titus entering the defeated city of Jerusalem commends the strength of that city's towers and especially the God of Israel, who indeed 'has been with us in the war'. It was God who brought down the Jews from these strongholds; for what power have human hands or machines against these towers.

He referred to another story in which a Jewish soldier corrected the view of Alexandrian soldiers in shooting the bird (Ap 1.201-204). This clearly shows the use of aesthetic elements by Josephus not only in narrating the events but also in interpreting them in order to share certain meanings with his audience.

The rabbinical texts come from a later period (4th century CE), but they contain certain earlier traditions (such as those of Hillel's). Some of them have numerous examples of a triadic form and use aesthetic elements which are similar to those used in the parable of the Good Samaritan⁵⁵. My study does not compare the rabbinical parables with those of Jesus as if his hearers were aware of them. But by pointing to a common practice and continuity between the Old Testament, and the Inter Testamental texts, and Philo's writings, this study strongly argues that Jesus' hearers were aware of the use of the aesthetic aspect of communication in the religious interpretation - particularly in the parables.

Parables were less used in some of the contemporary Jewish texts. It is very difficult to trace any story form of parables among those writings except in later rabbinical writings. This study mentions a few references that could support the argument that Jesus' audiences might be familiar with the parabolic way of communication. The Qumran texts contain one parable - the parable of the Tree (4Q 302a). Philo has a few parables in Ebr 35,155 and Conf Ling 99. Josephus retells Nathan's story in Ant 7.147-150; 8.44. Josephus writings are dated after 70 CE, but they are used to show the possible use of the parabolic forms among the Jewish interpreters. Some of these references point out the possible use of some forms of parables by the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus. They also suggest that the parables

did not take a story form during the time of Jesus. Many of them used the aesthetic elements in the parables in various forms.

It was not till after 200 CE the rabbinical writings recorded parables, but some scholars argue that the oral tradition of the Tannaitic period could be attributed to the time of Jesus or even earlier. Young [1989:55] argues that parables took shape as artistic creations in oral teachings before they became a literary genre and that they arose from Haggadic teachings. He recognises that the parables preserved from Hillel and Shammai were fragmentary and that R. Johanan b. Zakkai (90 CE) employed the parable as a teaching device [1989:107]. He also points out that illustrations and parables appear frequently in midrashic texts which deal with Halakhic matters [Young 1989:60]. Young's work depends greatly on the later rabbinic documents which can be dated from third century Christian Era⁵⁶. The editorial work for more than two centuries on the original tradition makes it difficult to compare them with the parables of Jesus.

This study agrees with Stern [1991:43] that the ideas and assumptions from two and a half centuries after Jesus cannot be imported into his parables, even though the rabbinical preservations of the oral tradition (such as Hillel's) might point to the presence of parables during the first century Christian Era. McArthur and Johnston [1990:107] argue that if the attributions to R. Johanan b. Zakkai (90 C.E.) are correct, then parabolic communication was already known among the rabbis at the time of Jesus. It is argued that Jesus' hearers might have been aware of this hermeneutic process in which aesthetic elements were used to interpret religious beliefs. In Jesus' parables, religious and cultural beliefs were mixed with aesthetic characteristics in

such a way that they helped the hearers to participate and construct the meanings of their beliefs along with Jesus.

iii. Using Familiar Scenes

Thirdly, the process of merging an audience's beliefs and the aesthetic aspects happened within the framework of their context. In the parables, Jesus displayed a familiar event in their life⁵⁷ or a familiar scene⁵⁸ and presented it as a story in order to interact with the audience's beliefs and worldview. These characteristics were part of the hermeneutic process that one can identify from the Old Testament and later rabbinical parables. In the book of Job there is a story similar to that of the sower in which plants grow differently in different places and this is used to differentiate the people of God from those who forget God (Job 8:9-19). In this narrative one of Job's friends tried to interpret the relationship of people with God and used a familiar event in their lives. In Isaiah 27, the prophet communicated with his audience by using their images (vineyard), by interpreting their beliefs (reconciling with God), and by addressing their social issues (bringing back Israelites) in a similar way to the parable of the sower.

Jesus interacted with his audience's religious beliefs and worldview as in the case of Haggadah. As in Haggadic method of interpretation, Jesus used these aesthetic elements such as characters, narrative forms and familiar scenes in order to capture and maintain the attention of his hearers. Strack [1965:7] defines Haggadah (aggadah) as all scriptural interpretation which is non-Halakhic in character. After an extensive study on the Haggadic exegesis, Fishbane [1985:408] concludes that within the framework of their new historical and life setting the new (Jewish) teachers using

Haggadic method revised and interpreted non-halakhic materials. Their (Jewish teachers) interpretations displayed new literary milieux and literary modes as well. This clearly shows that Jewish teachers were also engaged with their audience in this interactive process; a form which Jesus adopted. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the story form, the characters and the genre were constructed in such a way that they not only attracted the attention of the hearers but also interacted with their beliefs and worldview.

C. Contextual Interpretation

The third characteristic is that Jesus interacted with his hearers' beliefs and worldview by merging two horizons in parabolic form of communication⁵⁹. Jesus' parables enabled the interpreters to relate people's beliefs to their context. He not only shared and interacted with his hearers' beliefs but also set social and cultural events from their everyday life as the framework of this interaction. In this hermeneutic process the participants might have become aware of the reality created in the parables and in their imagination, and could have been challenged by their own meanings.

Jesus set their social and cultural context as a framework for his participation in their communication. In the parable of the wedding feast/great banquet, (Mt 22:1-14) a cultural event in the hearers' context was pictured by Jesus. The practice of inviting people to a wedding was a well-known phenomenon [Jeremias 1963:178]. Scott [1989:72-3] argues that three elementary aspects of Mediterranean social life and culture as basic categories for the parables were employed to represent symbolically the organisation of the sacred.

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus clearly reflects the different life style of people who are rich and who are poor (Lk 16:19-31). At the time of Jesus Palestinian society had a small community of rich people and a great mass of the poor. Among the great mass of the poor were those who worked as day labourers [Mealand 1980:4]. There was political exploitation of Judaea from time to time during this period. Crassus, a proconsul of Syria, plundered the Jerusalem Temple in 54 BCE taking about 10,000 talents of booty; in 43 BCE, Cassius, one of Caesar's murderers, demanded heavy tribute from Judaea (700 talents) [McCullough 1975:144]. Jesus was aware of the harsh economic realities of first century Palestine [Oakman 1986:205]. By referring to an event from everyday life or from a familiar story, he brought the audience closer to the story and participated with them in the construction of meanings for their belief.

By setting the context as a framework, he not only interacted with the hearers' beliefs but also with their social issues. Wilder argues that the parables not only enable hearers to give attention, come alive, and face things but also point out that they can be saved where they are [1982:74]. He argues that in the parables of the kingdom, Jesus mediates his own vision and his own faith. He notes:

The parable of the sower is prophetic, and not a discursive parable, a metaphor of faith. The realism, however, testifies to the fact that faith and expectation are identified with daily life and with God's operation there [Wilder 1982:85].

In the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the main aim is to interpret the attitude towards prayer, yet by setting the story within the framework of the hearers' context, it also challenges the social attitude of the Pharisee towards the Tax

Collector. Through this parable, Jesus expressed a view that the Pharisee needs to humble himself not only before God but also before his fellowman [e.g. Lk 18:9-14 – Borsch 1988:29]. In many parables this interactive process is implicit but in the parable of the Good Samaritan it is explicit. His participation not only interpreted his hearers' faith and social issues but also provided a model for the interpreters to participate in the people's hermeneutic process.

Jesus' audience was aware of the practice of relating their beliefs to their context. It is important to note that some of the rabbinical parables had similar characteristics. They not only reflected the context of the audience but also addressed the social and cultural issues implicitly. Fishbane [1985:433-5] argues that the Haggadic exegesis is historically conditioned. Their exegetical context reflected the real setting of the Haggadic discourse at a particular time and place (Hg 2:11-14 and MI 1:9-2:6). They also worked within a matrix in which there were attempts to revise the covenant values and thus they reinterpreted the tradition according to the needs of the people's context. The parabolic interpretation was in continuity with such practices and revealed the developed stage of these practices. By reflecting the social context of the audience the parables in some rabbinical traditions attempt to bring them closer to the story while at the same time they attempt to address the social issues.

The above three sections deal with three important aspects of religious communication at the time of Jesus with a particular reference to parabolic teaching: the hermeneutic process, aesthetic elements and mediating social and cultural contexts. These three aspects form the basis for understanding the ongoing interactive process in which Jesus and his hearers participated. It is shown that these

characteristics are found in other Jewish parables. These three aspects of communication enabled the interaction between Jesus and his hearers to be effective.

Some of Jesus' parables portrayed the characteristics of this process explicitly. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), belief in life after death was interpreted, the characters and forms of the story attracted and maintained the hearers' attention and the social and cultural issues were mediated. Some of the gospel parables show these three aspects of the interaction between Jesus and his hearers. This is particularly true of the parable of the Good Samaritan in which the interaction between Jesus and the lawyer is explicitly portrayed. These three characteristics of the hermeneutic process are explicitly displayed in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The parable of the Good Samaritan reflects a contemporary situation in the context of the audience and addresses the contemporary issue of neighbours. Jesus engaged in the ongoing interpretation of the word 'neighbour' within the context of the law. He interacted with the lawyer through this parable in which both participated in order to construct meanings. In this case the lawyer's answer seems to agree with meanings that arise from the parable. The parable also portrays an incident on the road to Jericho which would be familiar to the audience, and thus the story becomes relevant to them. Many New Testament scholars have studied this parable using a variety of analytical tools. By analysing and placing one of Jesus' parables – the parable of the Good Samaritan - in the context of the ongoing process of communication at his time, an attempt will be made to demonstrate its interactive characteristics of communication.

4. Identifying the Interactive Nature of the Parable of the Good Samaritan

A. Three Characteristics of Interaction in the Parable of the Good Samaritan

In the previous section three essential aspects of interactive communication in parables were demonstrated. These three aspects: hermeneutic process, the use of the aesthetic elements and contextual interpretation, enabled Jesus and his hearers to engage in the ongoing process of communication. In this section the role of these three aspects in the parable of the Good Samaritan is analysed. The parable of the Good Samaritan is selected for this study because it portrays these three aspects explicitly and has been analysed many times by New Testament scholars from a number of different perspectives.

In order to highlight these three characteristics this section will look at the expressions of beliefs [expressions such as eternal life], the issues in their contexts [issues such as the general attitude towards Samaritans], and the parabolic form [such as a story about a suffering man on the road]. It is essential to demonstrate that Jesus' hearers already knew these religious expressions, characters, and their meanings, the use of similar forms of communication, and the social issues that are displayed in the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is done by making comparisons with the contemporary writings that were available at the time of Jesus. The parable of the Good Samaritan and the dialogue in Luke 10:25-37 portray Jesus as one who interacts with the lawyer's religious beliefs, forms of communication and worldview.

While discussing the parable of the Good Samaritan, certain limitations need to be recognised. This study is aware of the issues identified by New Testament scholars regarding the authenticity of the parable of the Good Samaritan and its

context of a dialogue in Luke 10:25-37. There are discussions about the relationship between the parable and the dialogue and on the similarities between this dialogue and the dialogues in the other two gospels. Fitzmyer [1985], Marshall [1978] and Nolland [1993] identify the similarities and differences of this dialogue among the synoptic gospels. They agree that Luke edited the dialogue narrative in order to relate it to his context. Fitzmyer [1985:880] argues that Luke added certain elements in order to increase the tension within the story. Fitzmyer [1985:885-886] and Paffenroth [1997:37] agree that Luke might have even added verse 29 (chapter 10) in order to bring the dialogue and the parable of the Good Samaritan together. The author agrees with the above scholars that Luke has certainly edited the material that he received from the tradition.

Luke would have seen his role as an interpreter and a participant in the process in which the narrative was being developed further. For Luke this tradition was relevant to his context when it spoke the language and issues of his time. Thus this study attempts to place this parable in this process rather than try to trace the original context and the sayings of Jesus in the Lukan text. As the task of this study is to establish the fact that Jesus engaged in the ongoing communication process of his hearers, this study will analyse the three steps Jesus might have taken.

i. Sharing With His Hearers

The parable of the Good Samaritan displays certain expressions of beliefs, religious characters and story form that were already known among Jesus' audience. In the dialogue, the lawyer begins with a question about eternal life. Jesus relates it to the law and its understanding. The lawyer answers with the two love commandments,

that is, a simplified form of the law. Then the lawyer raises the question of neighbours. By using the parable Jesus took part in the lawyer's construction of meanings for the word 'neighbour'.

According to the narrative in Luke 10:25-37 the lawyer and Jesus seem to share the meanings arising from the parable. They shared these expressions of beliefs such as 'eternal life', 'law', 'love commandments', and 'neighbour' and to some extent their meanings. The characters such as 'priest', 'Levite' and 'Samaritan' and their meanings were familiar to the lawyer and other hearers. The meanings and interpretations of these expressions and characters were different among various religious groups at the time of Jesus. It is essential to identify the extent to which Jesus' hearers might have known these expressions, characters and their meanings.

'Eternal Life'

The phrase 'eternal life' might have had a variety of meanings in the Jewish context at the time of Jesus. Even though this phrase appears in Daniel 12:2, the concept of eternal life is as old as the other earlier writings of the Old Testament. In the creation story, the concept of 'the tree of life' is associated with the life eternal⁶⁰. The use of the phrase 'eternal life' in the Inter Testamental books⁶¹ shows that this phrase was well developed before the time of Jesus. At the time of Jesus the meaning of 'eternal life' (presumably initially life of the age to come) could have been related to life in God, life after resurrection, life after death and life after judgement⁶².

According to Josephus, Pharisees thought 'every soul is imperishable' but the soul of the good alone passes into another body, while the souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment (BJ 2.162-66). He notes the differences in the belief in life after

death among various Jewish religious groups. He points out that Essenes held the view that “the body is corruptible, but the soul is immortal after death, good souls depart to an abode beyond ocean, whereas bad souls are sent to dungeon” (BJ 2.154). He identifies the differences between Pharisees who believed in life after death and Sadducees who did not (BJ 2.164-66).

The gospel sources also confirm the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees in their belief in resurrection (Mt 22:23; Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27). This demonstrates the fact that the people at the time of Jesus shared a range of meanings for the phrase eternal life and the beliefs behind them. There were a variety of meanings attached to this phrase and further meanings were added in order to meet the demands of the changing context. The idea that the futuristic aspect of eternal life is determined by the life here and now, is shared by the synoptic⁶³ and the Jewish writers⁶⁴.

There are many different views among New Testament scholars about the use of this phrase by Jesus⁶⁵. It is possible to assume that the understanding of life and its eternity might have arisen out of the collision between Jewish and Hellenistic culture. These views highlight the different meanings that existed among the people at the time of Jesus which cannot be generalised to one or the other as scholars have tried to do in their arguments. The link between meanings of eternal life, law and love commandments will be analysed in the next section. The next expression of belief in the narrative is the simplification of the law into the two love commandments.

'Two Love Commandments'

In the Old Testament understanding, belief in God's love is related to love for God and also to love for one's neighbour. The relationship with one's neighbour is clearly stated in many instances of the Pentateuch books⁶⁶. This relationship has been seen as part of the fulfilment of the covenant, which God has established with his people. So, love towards others was seen as a proper response to God's love to his people. In the Prophets too, similar thoughts are well expressed (e.g. Jr 34:15-17; Zch 8:17).

In Jewish tradition, the bifurcation is between love/fear of God and keeping his commandments (Dt 10:12-13; Jos 22:5; Dn 9:4). The Old Testament division can however at times express a division between, on the one hand, one's fundamental orientation to God, and on the other hand the effect of this as directed outward to one's fellows [Nolland 1993:585]. To fulfil the law, one is called to practice these two commandments. The dialogue in Luke (10:25-29) shows that Jesus' audience already knew them. The first commandment is part of the Shema which is recited every morning and evening (Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21). The second commandment is found in Leviticus 19:18, which contains the priestly version of the Ten Commandments [Sanders 1990:68]. However these two commandments are not found together in any Old Testament references.

The response to God's love is expected in terms of keeping his commandments (Dt 7:9). Philo discussed two sets of five commandments, one set consisting of right behaviour towards God; the second set of responsibilities towards other human beings (Spec Leg 2.63). Philo states:

But among the vast number of particular truths and principles there studied there stand out practically high above the others two main heads: one of duty

to God as shewn by piety and holiness, one of duty to men as shewn by humanity and justice, each of them splitting up into multiform branches, all highly laudable [Colson 1962].

Philo's two principles clearly suggest a strong possibility of the use of these two love commandments at the time of Jesus by Jewish scribes.

Some of the rabbinic traditions offered numerous summaries of the commandments. Hillel's statement to a gentile - 'What is hateful to you, don't do to your fellow' - is similar to the second love commandment (B Shabb 31 A). These two commandments were brought together in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs though the dating of this book is complex. The following statements are very similar to the two love commandments found in Luke.

T.Issachar 5:2 - ' Ἀλλὰ ἀγαπήσατε τὸν κύριον καὶ τὸν πλησίον. But Love the Lord and your neighbour

T.Issachar 7.6 – τὸν κύριον ἠγάπησα καὶ ἄνθρωπον ἐξ ὅλης Τῆς καρδίας. The Lord I loved with all my strength, likewise, I loved also everyman as my children

T.Daniel 5:3 – Ἀγαπήσατε τὸν κύριον ἐν πάσῃ τῇ ζωῇ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀλλήλους ἐν ἀληθινῇ καρδίᾳ. Love the Lord in all your life and each other with a true heart [Charles 1908 Greek].

At this point one could agree with Marshall that Judaism had by this time provided an atmosphere in which this combination was natural [1978:444].

The combination of these two verses together might have been part of an *Yelammedenu* pattern of interpretation in which the *Gezerah Shewah* technique (bringing two verses together through a common word) is applied [Kimball 1994:135]. Philo's use of the two principles would support the presence of these two commandments together at the time of Jesus. These are some of the references that support the case that Jesus' hearers might have known and used these two

commandments together, yet, there is no explicit reference where one can find them together.

The gospel accounts differ in who said these commandments. In Luke 10 they were placed in the mouth of the lawyer. In Mark and Matthew, it was Jesus who replied with the two commandments listed (Mt 22:35-40; Mk 12:28-34). The question of the lawyer in Matthew and of the scribe in Mark is different. In the Lukan context Jesus asked the lawyer to live according to his own account of the law. By placing the words in the mouth of the lawyer Luke seems to believe that the Jewish audience shared these beliefs with Jesus. This clearly shows that the Lukan Jesus took part in their interpretation of the commandments with the lawyer and in a wider sense with his audience. The dialogue is extended with a question from the lawyer about the word 'neighbour'.

'Neighbour'

The narrative points to the fact that the lawyer wished to engage with Jesus in a search for meanings of the word 'neighbour'. Jesus' contemporaries used this word both in a narrow and a wider sense. The love of neighbour is laid down as part of Yahweh's demand in his commandments. One's *רֵעֵךְ* (neighbour) is characterised by the membership in the covenant community. Yet the use of the word in the Old Testament usually means a 'brother' who can be an Israelite or an alien who lives within the territory.

The law commanded an Israelite to treat aliens in the same way as the native and not to oppress the alien (Lv 19:33-34). Wenham [1979:273] strongly argues that the law goes further by commanding an Israelite to love the alien and so the demand

to love one's neighbour is extended here to include aliens. This command does not refer to cultic equality but speaks of the justice at the gate. Houten [1991:163] notes that according to the law, the alien was given the same status as the Israelite in all things except the laws regulating the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee that treated the alien as a second class citizen.

The word 'neighbour' refers to alien in the Old Testament, but the definition of the word 'alien' is not available in the law. In the Old Testament the command to love other people was extended to the 'sojourners' (גרִים) in the land (Lev. 19:34) but not to Samaritans or foreign gentiles. It is not clear whether this word 'sojourners' refers to the foreigners in the land of Israel or to a universal understanding of neighbour. In the Old Testament, the word 'neighbour' was used from the perspective of covenant relationship.

In the Inter Testamental period, the people in Israel were addressed as neighbours of Zion⁶⁷. The Inter Testamental writers often use the word neighbour in relation with Zion. For example in Baruch (4:24) it is stated, "For as the neighbours of Zion have now seen your capture, so they soon will see your salvation by God". They might have wished to particularise the meanings of the word 'neighbour' in order to refer those who were within the Jewish community. By this time an identity crisis began to occur among Jews, as the political rulers carried out the process of hellenising Jews.

Those Jews who migrated outside Judea began to widen the understanding of this word. As they came back, they may have influenced the local community's outlook about non-Jews. Nolland [1993:584] notices that there are more generous sentiments in some Jewish texts in attitude towards a neighbour. This is to say people

began to extend the meaning of this word in the commandment so that they might have an inclusive attitude towards other human beings in general⁶⁸. This supports the main argument that the command to love one's neighbour was understood and interpreted in a number of ways. Some of them began to see the word 'neighbour' as an inclusive word whereas some began to narrow their definition to smaller groups and communities.

Some texts suggest that the Pharisees disdained the common Jews (Jn 7:49; Ab 2.6). The Qumran community commanded one to love the sons of light who are the members of their community and to hate all sons of darkness (1QS 1:9-10; 2:24; 5:25; 1QM 1:1). In the Qumran community the neighbour would mean the other member of the community who kept the Manual of Discipline⁶⁹. Within the context of this difference in belief, Jesus interacted with the lawyer with the meaning of the word 'neighbour'. He shared the belief in the covenant fellowship while recognising the members' role outside this relationship as some of his contemporaries had done. This shows that the Jewish interpreters even before the time of Jesus accepted a wide range of meanings for the word 'neighbour'. This process continued and was well developed in the later rabbinical texts which considers alien or strange people as neighbours⁷⁰. While developing an imaginary context in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the character of a priest and of a Levite are brought into the story in order to contrast their action with that of the Samaritan.

'Priest and Levite'

The parable of the Good Samaritan displays a number of roles and characters which are related to Jewish beliefs. The character of a priest and of a Levite is

portrayed in contrast to the character of a Samaritan in this parable. There might have been diverse views among the hearers concerning these offices: some held them with high respect whereas some had low regard for them⁷¹. In particular a priest and a Levite represent the temple authorities even though their roles cannot be limited to ritual activities in the temple. Priest and Levite, terms that represent two orders of clergy, were in the service of the temple at the time of Jesus. Both were hereditary.

In the New Testament times the Levites were an order of cultic officials, inferior to priests but nevertheless a privileged group in Jewish society [Derrett 1964:211]. Some priests served as judges. They were often scribes, a title that covers a range of activities [Sanders 1992:170]. The priest's first concern was the sacrificial system. The priests who continued serving at the altar while they were being cut down by enemy swords showed their attitude clearly enough. Their secondary activities were manning the gates and walls. The name 'Levite' originally designated a member of the tribe of Levi a descendent of Jacob's third son (Gen 29:34). In the Old Testament 'Levite' was commonly used for those descendants who were not Aaronids, but who were entrusted with minor services related to the temple cult and rites [Fitzmyer 1985:887].

A priest was highly respected by the Jewish public even though his duty was not necessarily related to the temple. According to Philo, Priests and Levites were the bearers of prestige, the teachers and exemplars (Spec Leg 4.190). They were responsible not only for the religious and social life of Israelites but also for the political life of the people. These references show that the people gave full respect to the office of a priest and of a Levite at the time of Jesus. Ben Sira (Sirach) regarded the priests as the nation's teachers (45:17). It states, "In his commandments he (God)

gave them (priests) authority and statutes and judgements, to teach Jacob the testimonies, and to enlighten Israel with his law". Josephus attributed to Moses the commandment 'to let them (kings) do nothing without the high priest and the council of elders (Ant 4.224). These views reflect two different attitudes of the lay people towards these offices.

Some texts of the Dead Sea community expected the high priest and the king-messiah to defer to the priests in all legal matters (4QpIsa^a/4Q 161:20f). Probably they mean the priests in the Qumran community. They expected the priests to have the qualities of righteousness, justice, loving kindness and humility (1QS 8:1-4). This shows that the offices of priests and Levites were given much importance by the people and to some extent by the rulers even during Roman domination. At the same time there are instances where their evil activities are depreciated. They were referred to together in some passages in Inter Testamental books⁷² and in Josephus' writings (Ant 11.140).

At the same time in some of the references in the prophets the image of a priest is negatively portrayed which shows that the attitude towards them could change. Isaiah speaks of the priest and the prophet filled with strong drink (28:7). Jeremiah refers to the priests who deal falsely (6:13) and declares that both prophet and priest are profane, for 'in my house I found their wickedness' (23:11). The author of Psalms of Solomon (8) accused 'them' (obviously priests), of incest, adultery, making arrangements to trade wives and plundering the temple treasury (around 63 BCE).

The Qumran commentary on Habakuk (1Qp Hab 12:8) talks about the wicked priest. It is difficult to identify this wicked priest with any historical person. In the

later writings the Hasmonean priests were accused of performing great impiety in the Holy of Holies (T Mos 6:1; T Levi 14:5f). Josephus related stories about the scandalous and dishonest behaviour of aristocratic priests (Ant 11.140; 20.179-81). There is a possibility that this attitude might have been shared by some of the hearers. This attitude was mediated through the parable of the Good Samaritan even though no explicit judgement is passed on them.

The parable of the Good Samaritan neither supports nor criticises the activities of the priest and the Levite but presents them as realities. Some scholars relate the behaviour of the priest and of the Levite in the parable with the law relating to rituals and defilement [Marshall 1978:447; Fitzmyer 1985:883]. There are prohibition rules regarding touching dead bodies (e.g. Lv 21:1-4; Nm 19:11-16; Ezk 44:25). But the parable does not mention anything regarding defilement even though some of the audience might have been aware of this fact.

This parable portrays Jesus as one who shared the popular belief in these offices while recognising the need for a change in their roles. By identifying these expressions and characters that are linked with the hearer's belief in some of the references in the Old Testament, Inter Testament, and in other texts, it has been argued that Jesus shared their belief. Jesus enabled his hearers to interpret their beliefs by reflecting and addressing their social and cultural contexts. The mediating role of the parable will be discussed in the next section.

ii. Reflecting and Addressing

Some of the synoptic parables reflected and addressed the social and cultural issues of the context in which Jesus and his hearers lived. This enabled Jesus' audience to engage in a search for meanings along with him from within their context. This is evident in the parable of the Good Samaritan. While reflecting upon these issues the parables mediated and challenged the hearer's worldview by highlighting certain meanings. Before identifying the social and cultural issues in the parable of the Good Samaritan, this study acknowledges the influence of different contexts on the synoptic narratives as Stein has points out in his identification of a threefold *sitz im leben*⁷³ [1978:286-91].

'Dialogue Reflects Context'

The dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer reflected on the one hand the nature of the dialogue between two religious teachers and on the other hand the nature of the dialogue between the early Christian followers and their Judaic counterparts. It pictures the cultural interaction among religious teachers and the nature of the public debate during that time. Neyrey [1991:25] gives a picture of the dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer within the context of ancient cultural systems. He argues that Luke's gospel portrays frequent negative challenges to Jesus' honour and to his claims to a special role or status. Neyrey [1991:25] defines 'honour' as the positive value of a person in his or her own eyes plus the positive appreciation of that person in the eyes of his or her social group. He [1991:50] points out that Jesus both maintained his own honour implied in his claim to be God's prophet, and he achieved new honour by his success in shaming his challengers. Malina and

Rohrbaugh make a similar argument [1992] in terms of challenge - riposte in which the challenge is the centre of the focus. The exchange with the lawyer in 10:25-37 illustrates the challenging nature of public questions.

'Parable Reflects the Context'

Not only the dialogue but also the parable itself reflects the social and cultural context. The dramatic picture of a traveller's encounter with robbers, shows the reality of the time. The robbers' role in the story portrays three issues prominent at the time of Jesus: poverty, exploitation and revolution. Josephus spoke of the Essenes who carried on their journeys arms, precisely as protection against highway robbers (BJ 2.124-5). Josephus made note of the presence of the robbers along this road (BJ 4.474). In Strabo (16.2.41), it is shown how Pompey destroyed brigands here on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is difficult to identify the robbers in the parable as revolutionaries [Jones 1930].

Many people might have become poor because of the exploitation of the political rulers and might have become robbers (Ant 18.272-74, BJ 2.250-3; Vita 38). Josephus recorded that many of the poor and needy were being helped by the social bandits (Vita 63.80; 63.298; BJ 2.652; 4.504-8). The exploitation and poverty among some people might have led them to become robbers. The parable of the Good Samaritan does not suggest such a picture of robbers. At times the robbers might have helped the social bandits.

Freyne [1982:50] and Horsley [1981:409-32] point out that the revolutionaries with radical Jewish nationalist aspirations contributed to the conflicts and disorders in the region. Horsley [1987:37] points out that a form of violent

protest and resistance to the oppression of the Jewish people under Rome was the endemic social banditry. He argues that the structural violence of injustice and oppression in Roman Palestine was sowing the seeds both of resistance and eventually of its own susceptibility to more genuine revolutionary challenge. It is difficult to identify the bandits with revolutionaries because their intention in the story is given as robbery.

By applying modern sociological models and methodologies, Malina and Neyrey [1991:162] argue that all through Luke's writings there is evidence of the great disparities in wealth, power and privilege present in the Roman Empire⁷⁴. Luke and Acts reveal the general conditions of political insecurity and subsistence anxiety in the ancient countryside⁷⁵. Many marginalised and landless people appear in the pages of Luke-Acts⁷⁶. Thus the content of the parable reflects the social and cultural context of the audience at the time of Jesus. The parable does not suggest any proper use of material wealth here even though such meanings might have been recognised by the Lukan audience from his presentations of other narratives.

The robbers' role in the parable of the Good Samaritan might have led the hearers to think about three prominent social issues: poverty, exploitation and revolution. Even though the motive of the robbers is not clearly stated in the parable, it describes their attack on the traveller. It cannot simply be supposed that the robbers attacked this traveller because of their poverty. It can be argued that the parable implicitly assumes the poverty of the people and the presence of robbers as the realities at the time of Jesus. Within this context, it attempts to address the issue of neighbour.

'Parable Addresses the Social Issues'

The parable of the Good Samaritan does not simply reflect the people's context but it also addresses the social and cultural issues of their time. By using the character of a Samaritan, it addresses the issue of the attitude of Jewish people towards other people implicitly. It also addresses the failure of the religious authorities to respond to the immediate reality and thus challenges them to reinterpret their social roles. In order to identify the way in which the parable addresses the social issues, it is essential to see the role of three characters - priest, Levite and Samaritan - within the wider context of Jesus and of his hearers. The process of Hellenisation might have caused great tension among the various communities living within and outside Judaea. Derrett [1973:49] argues that the Hebrews' failure to assimilate and to be absorbed, and their stubborn adherence to their cultural and social norms often led to a cultural clash. The Jews believed that they must protect their culture from contamination from the alien ways of others.

There are sentiments of this kind in some Jewish texts even though not all references are seen in a negative light. Balch [1998:24] argues that there is enough evidence to identify the conflicts within both Judaism and Christianity concerning questions of ethnic alienation and integration or assimilation. He gives three examples in 2 Maccabees which the perceptions on Gentiles are not negative (e.g. 4:49; 12:30-31; 14:24) [Balch 1998:27]. While 2 Maccabees is not hostile to Gentiles as such, it is hostile to the change from Jewish to Greek customs. Balch [1998:46] concludes that the books such as 2 Maccabees, Esther and the letter of Aristeas do not promote one normative relationship (e.g. Aris Ex 228), but a spectrum of possible relationships with foreigners. This supports the main argument in this study that there

was a plurality of understanding of the word 'neighbour' particularly when it refers to a foreigner. Jesus' hearers could have been familiar with a wide range of meanings of this word. But it should be noted that these examples of resistance to assimilation come after a period in which much assimilation had already occurred.

The parable of the Good Samaritan displays the character of a Samaritan as a Hero of the story. It does not portray him as one who is in need. By showing mercy, he proved himself a better neighbour than the priest and the Levite. The parable implicitly addresses the issue of the exclusive attitude of Jews towards Samaritans. There is a complexity in the attitude towards Samaritans in the writings of Josephus. Coggins [1987:257] notes that on the one hand Josephus regarded them as rivals to the Jerusalem community, and essentially external to it, and on the other hand he identified them as part of a larger community of Judaism. While reflecting the prevailing Jewish attitude towards Samaritans, Josephus recognised them as one variant within Judaism. This recognition did not reduce the tension between Jews and Samaritans. Josephus portrays Samaritans as those who offered to help build the temple. Because of the refusal of Jews, Samaritans denounced them. They again had quarrels with the Jews [Ant 11.88; 12.10; 13.275-277].

According to Jewish understanding of the law, it was not essential for a Samaritan to offer help, yet he offered help to the injured man. Derrett [1973:58-9] notes that the Samaritans regarded the Jerusalem cult as improper [Ant 18.30]. They believed that it is their religious duty to belittle the Jewish rabbis and their Law. The oral element of the law was totally rejected by them. They did not regard all the historical and prophetic books as canonical. The attitude of Jews towards Samaritans is a complex one and so is the attitude of the Samaritans towards Jews. On the one

hand the parable implicitly assumes the attitude of the Jewish audience towards the Samaritan and on the other explicitly pictures him as a hero and a saviour of the injured man. Jesus did not criticise the negative attitude of Jews towards Samaritans in the story nor replace it with an alternative attitude but he enabled his listener to interact with him by participating in the story.

This analysis clearly shows that the parable of the Good Samaritan reflects the social and cultural context of Jesus' audience and thus addresses their issues. By doing so Jesus was able to interact with their worldview and to participate in their search for meanings of religious beliefs in the changing context. Whenever there was a change in the social context of the Jewish people, their interpreters attempted to find new meanings for the expressions of religious belief. Without reflecting the audience's context, Jesus might not have engaged in their ongoing process of communication. The parables displayed characters, places and events from the audience's context by using certain aspects of parabolic communication which will be identified in the next section.

iii. Participating

Jesus participated in his hearers' communication process by using well-known forms and characters in parables. In the previous section, it was noted that his hearers were already aware of the use of some *parabolic forms* in their interpretations even before the time of Jesus⁷⁷. There is not enough evidence in Philo and Josephus and in the Inter Testamental writings to make it plain that Jewish interpreters used the *story* type of parables during this time except a few comparisons and allegories. It

was also noted that the word 'parable' could include a variety of forms and genre found in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament.

'Using Familiar Characters'

Even before the use of actual parables, Jewish interpreters and their audience shared forms and meanings and used characters, such as priests and Levites in their teachings. Jesus' hearers were aware of the characters and their meanings displayed in the parable. Jesus enabled his hearers to dramatise the parable in their mind and thus allowed them to develop the meaning of these characters for their own context. In order to participate in the people's process of communication, he borrowed their characters and displayed them through the familiar genre of the parables using aesthetic means. By displaying these well-known characters and forms, Jesus brought his hearers into the context of the story and placed the context of the story near to their situation.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan the characters are those of a traveller, thieves, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan, an ass, oil and an innkeeper. Even though Jesus' hearers knew these characters, their meanings were diverse in nature and were even used by different groups for different purposes. For example, the character of a Samaritan had positive⁷⁸ and negative⁷⁹ connotations among the Jewish audience as one can see in the gospels. It has already been pointed out in the previous section that Samaritans were known as allies of the Jewish religion even though many considered them as enemies.

In the parable, the character of the priest conveys certain meanings. These meanings represent the positive and negative expectations⁸⁰ of Jesus' audience with

regard to the priest's job. The religious roles of a priest and of a Levite were highly respected by the Jewish communities⁸¹. In the previous section the ambiguous attitude of the Jewish audience towards a priest and a Levite was highlighted. Even though the story indicated the failure of the religious authorities to offer help, Jesus does not pass any explicit judgement on them in the story. The story compares the role of a priest and of a Levite with the character of a Samaritan who offered help at that incident.

These examples demonstrate the fact that Jesus participated in the communication process of his hearers in which diverse meanings and characters were already shared and displayed. Among different possible meanings, Jesus' parables highlight certain elements that are relevant to his hearers' context. For example, the meaning of the role of a Samaritan is relevant to the context because there was enmity between Jews and Samaritans during that time. The use of contemporary characters and their meanings in the parables are part of the common practice of interpretation. In his participation, Jesus not only shared and interacted with the meanings of the existing characters but also presented them through a form that was known to his audience.

'Using Familiar Haggadic Forms'

The problem with the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan is that many of the texts including Inter Testamental books, the writings of Philo, Qumran texts, and the writings of Josephus do not contain similar forms of stories. The lawyer is not presented with a role model but with an unexpected character (Samaritan) that might enable him to interpret his beliefs. For reasons already given this study

considers this parable to be more than a straightforward example story⁸². Example stories were less used in the texts that were contemporary to Jesus⁸³. Stern [1991:197f] claims that parables were popular at the time of Jesus among the Jewish audience. His hypothetical argument that the scribes did not consider them worthy to be recorded until late antiquity does not hold good except in a single reference to Bar Kappara (late rabbinical writings).

My study recognises the fact that there is an absence of the use of the example stories just before the time of Jesus. Some of them used 'parables' in a shorter form (the prophets, the Qumran texts and Philo's writings). In this section it is argued that Jesus' contemporaries made use of aesthetic elements and plots in their teachings. This is supported by the fact that such characteristics of communication occur in both the Old Testament and in the Inter Testamental books. Old Testament references show that some of the early prophets used such forms and genre in their parabolic communication (e.g. Nathan's story in 2Sm 12:1-4, Jehoash's fable in 2Ki 14:8-10). My study argues that Jesus could have brought the Haggadic practice of interpretation with the *mashal* type of communication together to result in this story form. It points out the use of Haggadic method of interpretation by the Old Testament prophets and by other Inter Testamental writers.

The aesthetic characteristics of the parable have similarities with other stories used by Old Testament and other contemporary texts. Fishbane [1985:285] argues that the vast majority of cases of Haggadic exegesis in the Hebrew Bible involve implicit or virtual citations. He also notices that this exegesis existed within the Old Testament [1985:291]. He points out that the Old Testament prophets have these procedures of Haggadic exegesis in their narratives [1985:429]. My study agrees

with Fishbane that Haggadic exegesis was a familiar method of interpretation at the time of prophets. Jesus' contemporaries might have developed this form and used it in different ways. In the Haggadic interpretation the form of the folk tales was blended with the interpretation of the text with a freedom of structure [Schwartz 1983:85].

In the light of this argument, it can be argued that the parable of the Good Samaritan could be a Haggadic exegesis of the narrative in 2 Chronicles (28:5-15). Spencer [1984:314] has identified this link between the parable of the Good Samaritan and the passage in 2 Chronicles. By comparing the parable of the Good Samaritan and the narrative in 2 Chronicles (28:14f), this study argues that similar characters and meanings might have existed among some sections of Jewish society at the time of Jesus. The form and the words used in both these narratives (the parable of the Good Samaritan and thereby in Chronicles) support an assumption that the parable could have been an outcome of Haggadic interpretation. This method of interpretation and the genre of Jesus' parables could be traced to Hillel and Shammai, teachers in the early first century. There are examples in the later rabbinical parables that have similar narrative forms⁸⁴ and genre⁸⁵ to the gospel parables.

Among them, Haggadic exegesis combined different narrative forms and genre by using aesthetic elements. It is difficult to compare rabbinical texts with that of Jesus' parables because most of them came from a later stage or underwent editorial changes. It can be argued that Jesus' hearers might have been familiar with Haggadic technique of interpretation. Jesus might have been aware of different forms and means as he engaged himself in parabolic communication with the people. In

order to capture and maintain his audience's attention, he moulded characters, forms and genre into a genuine parable by using aesthetic aspects of communication.

'Using Aesthetic Elements in Haggadic Exegesis'

The aesthetic elements were displayed in the parables in order to enable the audience to participate in the process along with Jesus. By comparing other texts, it may be possible to identify whether Jesus interacted with the existing practice of using aesthetic elements. Jesus' use of aesthetic elements in the parable differed from their use in fantasy stories and myths. The parable of the Good Samaritan displayed those characters and plots that were part of everyday human life [Jones 1964:113-6].

It is essential to recognise that Jesus engaged in the people's process of communication by interacting with the aesthetic elements. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, an unidentified traveller was brought into the scene and the background was the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. This setting on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho brought the context of the story closer to the audience's place. Nolland [1993:593] points out that the Jericho of New Testament times is to be distinguished from ancient Jericho.

Marshall [1978:447] gives a picture of this road which descends some 3,300 ft in the course of 17 miles. Jericho was rebuilt by Herod the Great about a mile and a half to the south, on the western edge of the Jordan plain (BJ 4.451-4 & 4.473-5). Josephus refers to an incident in which Pompey, the Roman Emperor destroyed brigands here (BJ 4.478 cf. Strabo 16. 2.41). The arrival of bandits in the story raised a sympathetic attitude towards this traveller which was further increased by the attack and by the description of his condition. Jesus used these elements in order to

enable his audience to feel the reality which he displayed in the story and thus allow them to participate in the search for meanings relevant to them.

Such use of aesthetic elements in the parables was a common practice among Jewish interpreters. It was an ongoing process of communication in which his contemporaries used these elements as a way of capturing and maintaining the attention of their audience in order to interact with them. These aspects of communication could be found in the Haggadic exegesis which was a common practice during the later rabbinical period. The Haggadic exegesis on the texts had stories which displayed such elements. Schwartz [1983:87-93] notes the development in the Haggadic process of the story of Cain in which different aesthetic elements (such as embellishment) and popular forms (such as fantasies and dreams) were added at different historical stages. Jesus participates in such exegetical practice in order to maintain the attention of the lawyer and of the audience⁸⁶ in general.

B. Jesus' Interaction With His Hearers

i. Interacting With Their Faith

This section will analyse certain expressions that are related to Jewish faith and that are found in the parable of the Good Samaritan and in the dialogue narrative. The primary task is to trace the process in which these phrases, their meanings and the links among them were being developed and brought together. These expressions (such as eternal life, law, love commandments and neighbours) and their meanings are interwoven in the narrative in Luke 10: 25-37. In order to establish the fact that Jesus' hearers were already aware of these words or phrases and their meanings, the use of similar words and meanings in other contemporary texts - Old Testament,

Inter Testamental, New Testament texts - will be pointed out. The process in which the convergence of the beliefs in eternal life, law, love commandments and neighbour had occurred among the Jewish people will be identified in this section.

'Life, Love Commandments in the Inter Testament and Old Testament Writings'

In the early books of the Old Testament, the word 'life' was understood as something natural, vital and pertaining to this world⁸⁷ [Brown 1971:478]. In the Pentateuch, the words (commandments) of Yahweh confronted the worshipping community with a choice between 'life and death' (Lv 18:5; Dt 30:15-20; 32:47). The word 'life' in the Old Testament referred not only to the duration of lifetime or a physical and natural life but also to the true life in God⁸⁸. In order to have this true life one had to love God and to obey God's commandments⁸⁹ (Dt 30:16-20). The response to the love of God was expected in terms of keeping his commandments. The call to love one's neighbour was part of the commandments. The relationship within the covenant community was seen in the light of its relationship with God⁹⁰. These references in the books of Pentateuch show that the meanings of the word 'life' were seen in the light of social and religious relationship with fellow Israelites.

The members of the covenant community were expected to practice the law in order to have life in God. As God's love was extended to a sojourner, the relationship with one's neighbour was not merely limited to the members of the covenant fellowship but was extended to the aliens who lived among this community (Dt 10:18-19). To be part of the covenant community, one had to understand the law and live accordingly. In the dialogue (Lk 10:25-29), the lawyer simplified the law into two love commandments which then led to a question about the identity of one's

neighbour. These two commandments might have been familiar to Jesus' hearers but were not cited together in any instances of the Old Testament. In this dialogue in Luke the two commandments are not related explicitly, that is, the idea of love for a neighbour is not linked with the concept of loving God. According to this narrative in Luke 10, if the lawyer wants to inherit eternal life, he should practise these two commandments in his present life.

The overlapping of the meanings of the words 'life', 'law' and 'neighbour' have occurred even in the early days of the Old Testament⁹¹. But at this time neither these terms (such as eternal life, neighbour) nor their meanings were developed in ways which we can trace. These expressions such as life, life in God, law, commandments, neighbour and their meanings were already used in the Pentateuch and were linked together implicitly in different passages. In the later Psalms, the traditional view of life was replaced by an understanding of life which was seen in relation to the fellowship with God⁹². According to some references in the Psalms and in Isaiah, this fellowship with God cannot destroy life even after death (e.g. Ps 49:15; Is 26:19).

Prophets saw the relationship with one's neighbour as part of the fulfilment of the covenant, which God established with his people (e.g. Zch 8: 17). In the understanding of later prophets the covenant relationship was described as the loving kindness, faithfulness and righteousness of God [Eichrodt 1961:250]. The book of Hosea pictures God as one who cares for his people as a father (11:1,3,4). But for Jeremiah Israel failed to recognise this love as real (2:6-8; 3:4-5). Eichrodt [1961:258] argues that the mystery of divine love was linked directly with the conduct of people in his covenant fellowship not merely in terms of legal contract but

in terms of their response to God's mercy. There was development of a multiplicity of meanings for these phrases during this period which overlapped.

In Daniel 12:2, this phrase designates the life of the future age after the resurrection of the dead. Von Rad [1962:407] points out a change introduced by the apocalyptic writings with their expectation of a general resurrection, first apparently of the righteous and then of all, some to 'eternal contempt' (Is 26:9-11,14) and others to 'eternal life' (Dn 12:1-3). This supports the argument that this belief in life in God was constantly changing as were the meanings attached to them. There is evidence in the Inter Testamental references that show that the Hellenistic view of life existed and at times influenced Jewish thinking⁹³.

From the Maccabean period onwards belief in a hereafter, resurrection and eternal life was widespread among Jewish theologians. Further meanings might have been added owing to the influence of the Hellenistic understanding of life⁹⁴. During this time the Jewish writers would have shared the belief that the future character of 'eternal life' is determined by life here and now (e.g. Sir 30:15-17; 4Macc 9:9; 12:12; 15:3-4). During the Inter Testamental period, meanings of phrases such as eternal life, covenant fellowship and neighbour were related to each other and were developed together⁹⁵. Different streams of meaning of the phrase 'eternal life' and of the word 'neighbour' were developed and available at the time of Jesus. It is argued that these words and phrases and their meanings were brought together before Jesus and so the dialogue and the parable in Luke 10 reflect part of this process.

'Life, Love Commandments and The Synoptic Gospels'

This was the broad context in which Jesus and his hearers participated in order to relate and interpret the meanings of these expressions of their beliefs. In this Lukan narrative the meaning of eternal life was related to the meaning of the word 'law'. It was held that observation of the Law of Moses would lead to life. The dialogue continued with the question of neighbour. Luke portrays Jesus as one who shared his hearers' belief and their expressions in order to interact with them. There was a multiplicity of meanings available for these phrases that were interconnected in different forms.

In Luke 18:18-25 Jesus' reply to the rich man's question about eternal life states the commandments. It is followed by the demand to sell his property and to follow him. Luke (18:30) places the eternal life in an eschatological context by saying, "there is no man who has left home.... for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive manifold more in this time and in the age to come eternal life". Schottroff [1981:108] points out that in Luke the word 'life' is being used in a strongly theological sense especially in two connections, that of the resurrection and that of correct conduct. The way of life is repentance and forgiveness of sins and the fulfilment of the Torah (Lk 10:25-37; 16:20-31). The word 'life' was used interchangeably with the phrase 'eternal life' in the synoptic gospels (Mt 19:16-17; 18:8-9 and parallels).

Whenever Luke mentions the love of God, he points out its social and cultural implications as well⁹⁶. Blomberg [1984:70] argues that with the dawning of the new covenant, Luke displayed a tension between the law and the teachings of Jesus. In contrast to this view Wilson [1983:53] argues that Luke's view of the law is not

merely one-sided, noting his attitude towards Jewish law and customs both negative and positive. Luke portrays Jesus as one who has concern for people other than the Jewish community⁹⁷. In the context of the parable, Jesus is not shown as one who is critical of the priests or of the Levites, but as one who expects to reform and reinterpret the roles of such religious authorities. These expressions and their meanings developed in this parable cannot be studied on their own because the meanings of the phrases used in this narrative are interwoven and are part of an ongoing process. The detailed study of the parable of the Good Samaritan in this section clearly places Jesus' interaction with the lawyer in particular and the hearers in general within an ongoing process of communication.

ii. Interacting With Their Communicative Forms

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, three essential characteristics of the parabolic form of communication contributed to this interaction. They are the individual characters, the genre and the aesthetic elements⁹⁸. These characteristics helped Jesus to capture the attention of the audience and to engage with them in their search for meanings. The story form of the parable uses aesthetic elements, imagination and characters in order to bring the hearer into its imaginary context. In the previous section it was noted that the Jewish public held different meanings to the phrases such as eternal life, law, love commandments and neighbour. Among the various understandings of these words, the characteristics of parabolic communication made the audience aware of certain meanings. This section will analyse the link between the meanings of these phrases such as eternal life, law and

love commandments in the dialogue and the roles of the characters such as priest, Levite and Samaritan and aesthetic elements in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

'Characters and Religious Expressions'

It is difficult to generalise the meanings that arise from the parable to all situations⁹⁹. This parable relates the meaning of the word 'neighbour' to the meanings of those expressions in the dialogue. In the parable these meanings were brought together by a number of characters, formal structure and plots in such a way that people could recognise them. This link was established by employing aesthetic elements. In this parable, the unidentified traveller is the frame of reference for the meaning of the word 'neighbour'. In order to make him a reference, the story brings the robbers onto the stage and leaves the traveller unable to help himself.

The parable of the Good Samaritan begins with an everyday event in which the traveller travels from Jerusalem to Jericho. It brings robbers onto the stage in order to create a tension and a problem in which the traveller is injured and left alone. This leads to an expectation of the one who comes to help the suffering man in that context. Via [1974:113] argues that the Samaritan wanted to communicate to the traveller healing which proceeds from his own will and concern, and that the robbers were his helpers along with innkeeper. For him, the robbers create a situation in which the Samaritan can show compassion. The priest and the Levite are his opposites.

The parable does not suggest that the robbers had to create the situation in order to make the Samaritan a good neighbour. Rather it was the reality in the story in which the Samaritan responded to the need of the wounded traveller which was

unfortunately created by the robbers. Then a priest and a Levite are brought into the context where the half-dead traveller is suffering on the road. The parable of the Good Samaritan is developed in a form in which a problem is created and is solved with a happy ending.

In the parable the role of the Samaritan is compared to the roles of the priest and of the Levite. Their characters are contrasted in their attitude towards the unidentified traveller. The meanings of the word 'neighbour' are understood within the framework of the law and of the understanding of the phrase 'eternal life'. Jesus' audience might have recognised the link between the meanings associated with characters such as the priest and the Levite and the meanings associated with words such as the law and eternal life. The lawyer's answer to Jesus' question seems to confirm his knowledge of this link (Lk 10:37). The story constructs an imaginary situation in which the hearers are left to search for meanings that are relevant to their own context.

By enabling the hearers to play the roles in this story, Jesus challenged them to see the meaning of the word 'neighbour' within the framework of their beliefs and their contexts. The meanings were not merely transferred either from Jesus or from the content to the hearers but also were an outcome of their participation in this process. Jesus was already adopting and developing certain meanings in his teachings before telling the parable of the Good Samaritan. His hearers might have interacted with the content of this parable within the overall context of his teaching¹⁰⁰.

'Genre and Plot'

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the unidentified traveller is present as the victim throughout and gives the plot its shape. He is the actantial recipient, while the actantial subject, the Samaritan, appears in the last episode. Via [1974:110] identifies this plot movement in the parable as an action-crisis-denouement. The motion of the plot is usually achieved by a combination of epiphor (extension of meaning through comparison) and diaphor (creation of new meaning through juxtaposition and synthesis)¹⁰¹. This motion gives a new vision of reality by evoking a sense of similarity between what were seen as dissimilar: a new vision which comes as a shock, but a shock of recognition [Via 1974:110]. By using this plot, these characters and their aesthetic role Jesus identified certain meanings of the word 'neighbour'.

Such an arrangement of plot might have been a common phenomenon before or at the time of Jesus. Nathan's story (2Sm 12:1-4) has similarities with that of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Both are open-ended stories. Both use unidentified characters. Both allow the hearers (in Lk 10 - lawyer and in 2Sm 12 - David) to come to a decision by identifying themselves with the characters in the story. There is another example (2Sm 14:1-11) in which a woman told this parable to the king David. This parable creates a problem by displaying certain characters and then commands the king to bring a happy ending to this situation.

Among the later prophets these stories are very rare yet similar plots were employed in many narratives (Is 5:1-7 open-ended parable) [Cathcart 1995:218]. The structure of the parable plays an important role in the construction of meaning even

though in the interaction between Jesus and his hearers it is not the only source of meaning. The genre and narrative form¹⁰² of the story play a vital role in developing and relating the meaning of the word 'neighbour' within the context of the love commandments, law and eternal life.

In the parable, the sympathy and anxiety of the hearers is raised owing to the suffering of the traveller and owing to the negligence of the priest and of the Levite. Jesus' audience could have expected either the priest or the Levite to offer assistance to this injured traveller. Bringing in these powerful characters and displaying them in a dramatic manner increases the aesthetic aspect of communication. The meaning of the parable cannot be constructed without considering the religious role of the priest and Levite. Their characters add religious colour to the story in which their failure to help the injured man can be seen as their ignorance of wider meanings of the law.

Some of Jesus' hearers might have imagined certain reasons for their action. The first reason is that the fear of robbers might have prevented them from helping the injured traveller [Nolland 1993]. The second reason is that ritual purity hindered them, as they would avoid touching any dead man (fear of defiling oneself by touching a dead corpse). Derrett [1964] argues that it is the fear of defilement that hindered the priest and the Levite from helping the injured man. Scott [1989:195] points to a reference in Leviticus (21:11) where a priest is not allowed to defile himself by touching a dead body. Some of these factors (such as ritual purity and fear) might have hindered the priest and the Levite from helping this traveller. These meanings that arise from the parable and the dialogue clearly show the distinction between the priest's and Levite's religious belief and their practice. In this parable they are expected to set examples by helping such people in accordance with the love

commandments but their refusal to help is in contradiction to the expectations of the law and of the people.

According to the dialogue narrative (Lk 10:25-27) it was the fulfilment of the law that demanded that a Jewish hearer love his neighbour. It is pointed out in the previous section that the law might have been known in simplified forms among Jesus' audience. In order to inherit eternal life according to the teachings of the Lukan Jesus it was necessary to fulfil the essential expectations of the law. The parable and the dialogue are connected with this underlying desire to interpret the word 'neighbour' within the framework of the meanings of the law and of eternal life. Crespy [1974:27] argues that Luke 10:25-37 fits well with the immediate context whose emphasis was on movement and journey. He also notices that these phrases were joined to one another by the implication that each one followed the other. He points out that the idea of inheriting eternal life was associated with keeping the law. Love of God and love of neighbour led to the definition of the word neighbour and to the mercy shown by the Samaritan [Crespy 1974:49]. The meanings of the religious expressions such as 'eternal life', 'law' and 'neighbour' are linked and interpreted through the characters, plots and story forms that are familiar to the audience.

'Aesthetic Elements'

The meanings of the characters arise from the contemporary experience of Jesus' hearers and are brought together in the parable by the aesthetic elements. The meanings that are developed in the parable of the Good Samaritan coincide with that of the dialogue. The aesthetic elements enable the hearers to develop the wider

meaning of the word 'neighbour' within the context of their beliefs in the law and in eternal life. This aesthetic aspect in the parable of the Good Samaritan was enhanced by the use of certain devices. Other details about the Samaritan's beast and his possessions added colour to the narrative. The connection between the dialogue and the parable also contributes to this aesthetic aspect of the narrative.

By not disclosing the identity of the traveller the story implicitly points out to the hearers that it could be one of them. The character of the suffering man, and the way in which a priest and a Levite neglect this man leaves the hearers in an aesthetic state where they either feel sympathy for him or identify themselves with him. The suffering (half-dead) traveller remains on the road until the Samaritan comes and the other two religious persons pass by. The priest and the Levite who are expected by the law to show mercy to the neighbour do not offer help to him.

The climax - the arrival of the Samaritan near the suffering man - links the plot to the aesthetic aspect of communication. Crossan [1974A] and Funk [1974B&C] make clear this aspect of communication - the unexpected happenings and climaxes - in the story and the progress with which it reaches its end. Crossan [1974A:75] notices the first climax in the balanced reactions of priest, Levite and the Samaritan in Luke 10: 31-33. He states:

The linguistic balance places the rift between priest and Levite on the one hand and the Samaritan on the other. The second and final climax is the rhetorical question of 10:36. In the literary sequence the robbers recede (into the) background, clerics follow them into stylistic oblivion, and in 10:36 the hearer (s) has one person left to face, and to face by his own necessary decision: the Samaritan judged as good [Crossan 1975:75].

The aesthetic characteristics of the parable of the Good Samaritan were constructed by displaying the characters through the story setting.

Some New Testament commentators have pointed out these elements without referring to them as aesthetic elements. Fitzmyer [1985:883] identifies the storytelling devices in the episode: the threesome in the *dramatis personae*; the Palestinian details; the answer of the Jewish lawyer, which studiously avoids using the Samaritan's name, and a certain improbability. Nolland [1993:591-92] notes that the parable itself began with the introduction of a man on a journey, clearly the chief figure of the parable, who continued to be on stage. He described the traveller's condition as one who is reduced, in an isolated place, to a desperate need. He dramatised the arrival of the Samaritan in the story by stating:

In what seems to be a lucky break, the arrival of a situation of high-grade potential helper raises hopes, soon dashed, for the man's rescue. This scene is then replayed, with a not quite so likely potential helper, who again brings no joy. Next on the scene is a classic villain figure, a Samaritan, who nonetheless has compassion on the sufferer. The story climaxes with the mention of the Samaritan's compassion [1993:591-92].

This dramatic interpretation clearly highlights the interest with which Jesus entered into his hearers' imaginative world. Nolland [1993:585] also describes the state of the hearers by noting, "the hearer is brought down gently from this high point of tension with a somewhat extended account of how the Samaritan attended to the injured man's immediate needs and took responsibility for his restoration to health". These are some of the aesthetic elements used in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The negligence of the priest and of the Levite might have increased the sympathetic attitude of the hearers towards the traveller. This was followed by an element of shock in the story that challenged the stereotypical thinking of the

audience. The lawyer and the hearers might not have expected the Samaritan to help this man. Funk [1966:204] points out that the first sentences of the story were in accordance with everydayness but the shock came with the introduction of the Samaritan. He notes that the logic of everydayness was broken upon the logic of the parable. Funk [1974C:74] identifies the meaning of the parable as the way auditors take up roles in the story and play out the drama. As a drama into which the hearers are drawn, the parable suggests that in the kingdom mercy is always a surprise. For Funk [1966:206], the parable is a story, a parabolic metaphor, that opens before the hearers a new vision of reality which shatters the everyday view. If the audience's participation in the construction of meanings through the parable is considered, then the numerous ways of interaction between Jesus and his audience need to be noted.

Some of the Jesus' hearers might have understood the parable as a metaphor whereas some might have understood it as a straightforward teaching or a simple story with certain meanings. That is why it is argued that the story cannot be identified simply as a metaphor. It has already been pointed out that the internal dynamism of the story and the historical situation of Jesus' day agreed [Crossan 1974A:75]. Crossan and Funk demonstrate the elements of communication in the formal structure of the parable that enabled Jesus and his hearers to interact. But the meanings of the word 'neighbour' arise out of this interaction (at this particular historical and cultural context) not merely from the structure of the parable.

If the hearers do not pay attention to the parable, then Jesus' involvement cannot achieve its purpose. It was not only the content that was communicated by Jesus to his hearers but also their involvement in this narration which enabled them to construct meanings. They constructed the meanings of the word 'neighbour' out of

the role of the Samaritan in the story, out of their beliefs and out of their context. Jones points out that the function of this aesthetic element was to obtain the interest and approval of the hearer until the tables are turned on him [1964:118]. In order to achieve this, Jesus had to use those elements that could capture and maintain the attention of his hearers - the aesthetic elements that they shared in common.

The parable of the Good Samaritan developed a situation in which the suffering traveller was in need of someone's assistance to pick up his life again. Funk [1974C] argues that an unexpected turn in the parable of the Good Samaritan caused the audience to look through the commonplace to a new view of reality. Nevertheless Funk points out that:

The parable does not, therefore, involve a transfer of information or ideas about an established world from one person to another. This means that both narrator and auditor risk the parable; they both participate in the narrative and venture its outcome [Funk 1974C:77].

This argument clearly supports the view of my study that Jesus and his hearers were involved in their ongoing process through the parable without knowing the outcome. Their engagement in the parabolic communication was made possible by the aesthetic characteristics of the parables which were popular and contemporary to the audience.

It has already been pointed out that Jesus presented characters and aesthetic elements that were known to his audience. By analysing the use of characters, plots and aesthetic elements in the parable of the Good Samaritan and in the Jewish texts, this section has argued that at the time of Jesus the Jewish public shared some of these characteristics of parabolic communication. These characteristics of

communication (characters, plots (genre) and aesthetic elements) were familiar to Jesus' audience.

Even though no story similar to that of the parable of the Good Samaritan can be traced at the time of Jesus, these elements of communication can be traced in some of the stories of the Old Testament and of other Jewish texts. This shows that at the time of Jesus, Jewish people may have enjoyed sharing the aesthetic characteristics by retelling the parables and historical narratives among themselves in various forms. In order to interact with his hearers Jesus took part in a process in which many of them were interested. This clearly shows that the use of these characteristics in the parable of the Good Samaritan enhanced the interaction between Jesus and his hearers and their participation in the ongoing process of communication.

iii. Interacting With Their Social and Cultural Context

The parable of the Good Samaritan portrays three characteristics of interaction between Jesus and the lawyer: their participation in the hermeneutic process, their involvement in parabolic communication and their shared concern for the social context. In this section it will be argued that the meanings in the parable do not merely evolve from the content or from the communicator but from the context in which Jesus and his hearers interacted. This means that the hearers would have developed their own meanings from the parable according to their respective contexts¹⁰³. Various changes in their social context [e.g. war, exile, Hellenisation] could have contributed to the changes and interpretations of the phrases, characters

and their meanings. The parable of the Good Samaritan is part of the ongoing communication processes and so its content mediates social and cultural issues.

Through this parable Jesus interacted with people's worldview, particularly with their understanding of certain social and cultural issues. By using this parable Jesus highlighted certain meanings of the word 'neighbour' that are relevant to their context. It has already been pointed out that meanings of the words such as neighbour, eternal life, law and love commandments were interrelated even before they were linked in the dialogue (Lk 10:25-37). Jesus' hearers already knew these words and the link between their meanings.

'Changes in the Context and Interpreting Belief'

The changes in the social, political and cultural context of the Jewish people tended to influence their beliefs and enabled them to search for meanings for their religious expressions such as 'eternal life'. Clements notes that kinship in the extended family in Jewish culture was increasingly being eroded by the political and economic changes which the biblical communities were experiencing [1992:21]. Some of these changes might have persuaded them to reinterpret their belief in the law and in their life. In this process not only meanings of the word 'life' but also their attitude towards the law, neighbours and the temple authorities was changing.

The meanings of these phrases underwent changes due to changes in the social and cultural process. Nickelsburg [1972:19f] argues that the persecution of Hasidic Jews by Antiochus because of their piety led to a belief in the resurrection of life and in the judgement after death. Belief in resurrection in the book of Daniel was developed to meet a religious need of the suffering Hasidic community. During this

persecution, Hasidic Jews read third Isaiah as a description of their own time [1972:20]. Nickelsburg notes:

This as two-way theology in which Daniel 12, Jubilee 23 and the Isaianic exaltation were concerned with the persecution and posited post-mortem judgement as a means to adjudicate this injustice, whereas others described eternal life and death as the reward and punishment for the deeds of men [1972:173].

This two-way theology is particularly compatible with a belief in the immediate assumption or immortality of the soul which also stresses continuity between earthly existence and eternal life. By the time Jewish religion came into closer contact with people from other cultures in the Hellenistic period, further meanings might have been added to this phrase. Saldarini [1974:134] points out that Nickelsburg's work [1972] generates a series of concepts which more adequately represent the varied and developing thought of the Inter Testamental period: exaltation, vindication, reward, eternal life, etc.

Nickelsburg [1972] identifies the development of the meaning of this phrase during the Inter Testamental period and relates it to the events that occurred during this period. The meaning of the phrase 'eternal life' was developed from this time onwards. Ideas about immortality, resurrection and eternal life were developed in three forms, all of which influence one another at different stages of the tradition. Under Hellenistic influence true life was increasingly seen as a gift of eternal life, life without end (4 Macc 7:19 - do not die; 16:25 - live to God; 17:12 - long-lasting life). From the Maccabean period onwards belief in resurrection hereafter and eternal life was widespread among Jewish theologians (Str -B 3. 481ff). In a similar way, other words and meanings might have been interpreted or reinterpreted during these periods in which many changes had occurred in their political and cultural context.

'Law, Life and Context'

The meaning of the phrase 'eternal life' is related to the understanding of the law and the love commandments. The understanding of the law might also have undergone changes owing to the influence of the social and cultural context. Koehler [1957:202] argues that laws comprising a number of commandments were never complete. Nevertheless all this temporary nature and incompleteness did not alter the fact that the law, where it existed, revealed the unconditional sovereign will of God. Von Rad [1966:390] also points out that the law was an open-ended revelation of God about his will to his people even though the Mosaic Law was the basis of any development. Both Koehler [1957:208] and Von Rad [1966:404] agree that the meaning and the interpretation of the law had changed during the time of the prophets. This shift highlighted the grace of God and Israel's relationship to him. Banks [1975:37] points out that certain tendencies appear in the post-exilic period, which have opened up the way towards a new understanding of the law. By pointing to the differences between the Jews of Alexandria and of Jerusalem, Urbach [1975:288] argues that the term 'Torah' is not confined to the Mosaic Torah and can include prophecies and the ethics of the Wisdom books.

The changes in the hearer's context might have influenced the link between the understanding of life and law. The narrative in Luke 10:25-37 relates this understanding to the meanings of the word 'neighbour'. These meanings arose from the context and in turn influenced it. In this parable these meanings were associated with certain representations of the social system. For example, a priest and a Levite represent the religious system. The topographical system is represented by placing the incident of the parable between Jerusalem and Jericho. The economic system is

portrayed by bringing in a traveller with money and the robbers' attack. The national and political system is represented by the Samaritan's movement in Judaea. This event in the parable was placed within the context of these systems and thus the meaning that arose from the story was conditioned by the context.

'Hellenisation and Neighbour'

Since the time of Alexander in the early part of second century the Jewish people had been undergoing a process of Hellenisation by means of their institutions, gymnasium and the Greek language. Jewish society underwent changes during the process of Hellenisation. The fear of Hellenisation among the Jews might have influenced their attitude towards non-Jewish people. To promote this trend Antiochus IV (from 175 BCE) installed high priests who were sympathetic to and supportive of his policies of Hellenisation [Roetzel 1987].

In 167 BCE Antiochus IV issued a decree forbidding observance of the Sabbath and the festivals. He banned circumcision and sacrifice and made possession of a Torah scroll a capital offence. He instituted observance of the Dionysiac rite to commemorate the king's birthday. This led to a number of revolts and wars in Israel which cost lives [Maccabean revolt and independence of Israel] until Rome gradually took over Judaea in 63 BCE. After this period Judaea mostly remained a peaceful region until 66 CE with minor incidents [Roetzel 1987:14-16]. But the Hellenistic ideas continued to influence Jewish religion and thought. Some of the Jewish public hated even those who were sympathetic towards Hellenisers. Because of the fear of assimilation, the law might have strictly been practised in terms of the ritual and

community regulations but not in terms of humanitarian requirements [Derrett 1973:51].

It has already been noted that the Jews lost their political autonomy in the first century and the non-Jewish populace might have appeared as an expression of the hated state of foreign domination. Yet there are more generous sentiments towards non-Jewish people in some later Jewish texts (Aris Ex 228; T Zeb 5:1). This supports the main argument that the second commandment (i.e. to love one's neighbour) might have been interpreted in a number of ways. Some of them understood the word 'neighbour' as an inclusive sense whereas some began to narrow their definition down to their own groups and communities. This was an outcome of the changing social realities during that time.

The effort to hellenise the Jewish people by political and aristocratic people might have had an effect on the attitude towards Hellenisers and so towards the gentiles. The understanding among Jesus' hearers cannot be generalised to an exclusive attitude because some might not have had a negative attitude towards non-Jewish people. In order to interpret the word 'neighbour', the parable of the Good Samaritan reflects and addresses the social and cultural context of Jesus' audience.

'Meanings, Beliefs and Parable'

In order to interpret the meanings and beliefs that are associated with the word 'neighbour', the parable of the Good Samaritan displays a small number of characters such as priest, Levite and Samaritan in an imaginary plot. The parable displays these characters, expressions and places in order to relate the audience's belief to their context. Because of its contextual meanings and relevance, Jesus'

audience could have grasped its meanings immediately. These elements of parabolic communication might have contributed to the construction of the meaning of the word 'neighbour' and could have related it to the context of Jesus' hearers. The parable implicitly portrays the living conditions of certain people by introducing them as robbers in the story. It reflects the socio-economic condition of robbers who were ready to steal and attack others. It does not address the issue of robbery and does not have any concern for their circumstances; rather it uses their characters to raise sympathy for the traveller's condition.

The character of a priest and of a Levite is displayed in order to emphasise the action of an outsider - the Samaritan - by contrasting them. The activities of a few priests were criticised by some Jewish texts at the time of Jesus. In this parable their actions (priest's and Levite's) portray the failure of the religious system to see these wider meanings of the law and to share them with their respective audience. Sanders argues that there is no need to generalise and to condemn all the priests [1992:187]. The character of the priest in the parable does not represent the behaviour of all other priests at the time of Jesus. In this particular context of the parable, this priest did not offer help to the injured man whereas a Samaritan offered assistance to him.

The meanings of the word 'neighbour' were interpreted through the character of the Samaritan. His action was contrasted with that of the priest and of the Levite in order to extend the meaning of the word 'neighbour'. This meaning was relevant because there was a tension between Jews and Samaritans. Many Jewish people hated Samaritans at the time of Jesus. One of the meanings of the character of the Samaritan in the context of Jesus and his hearers was that of an enemy. Yet the parable of the Good Samaritan portrays him as a saviour of the wounded man and a

model for the lawyer who struggles to understand the meaning of the word 'neighbour'. By displaying the Samaritan as a good neighbour, Jesus challenges the existing stereotypical views. The attitude towards non-Jewish people was also an issue at the time of Jesus which was implicitly addressed by the parable. There was a concern for neighbours among Jewish people where divisions and enmity were part of everyday reality.

Being part of this ongoing process of communication, the parable of the Good Samaritan reflects, reinforces, challenges and addresses the social and cultural issues of Jesus' hearers. Through the participation of Jesus and his hearers in the ongoing social process, was this interaction between them possible. Jesus was able to invite his hearers into this communicative act because the setting of the parable is taken from their everyday life-situation. The setting of the story within the framework of their context increases the aesthetic aspect, the hermeneutic technique, audience participation, the social relevance and the effect of communication. Thus Jesus could engage with his hearers in their construction of meanings that would challenge their worldview and their belief.

The aesthetic aspect of the parable combines the setting of the characters and the meanings within the context of Jesus' hearers in order to attract their attention. The humiliation of an unidentified traveller by the robbers heightens the excitement and sympathy of the hearers. By placing it within their context and by displaying familiar characters, Jesus wished to highlight a contradiction (paradox)¹⁰⁴ in the meanings of the word 'neighbour'. The parable displays this contradiction in a way that captures and maintains the attention of the audience. The introduction of the Samaritan into the parable might not have been a shock to Jesus' hearers. It was the

decision to make him the hero of the story that shocked them and challenged their stereotypical thinking. The story also ends with the hope of the Samaritan's return. These characteristics of the parable (excitement, contradiction, shock and hope) enabled the audience to become aware of the issues in their context. They not only became aware of their situation but also were challenged by certain meanings that arose from the context of the parable.

Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus shared his hearers' belief, their method of communication and their worldview. He took part along with them in their ongoing process of interactive communication in order to identify or mediate or construct meanings that were relevant to their context and to their belief. This clearly shows Jesus' concern to begin from the situation of his hearers, that is, to share their beliefs, to participate in their process of communication and to interact with their worldview. If these principles can be developed, it would be possible to challenge the existing views of Christian communication that were identified in the previous chapter. These principles would also help us to develop a theological basis for Christian communication that would support an interactive perspective. In the next chapter, these principles will be developed in the light of this interactive approach to Christian communication.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter a new theological paradigm is developed following the analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan from an alternative communication perspective. In this paradigm Jesus is seen as one who interacted with his hearers through the parable by sharing their beliefs, their forms of communication and their

worldview. Jesus and his audience were participants together in an ongoing process of communication which involved a search for the meanings of their religious expressions. Jesus took part in this search and so engaged in their hermeneutic process.

By enabling Christian communicators to become aware of such theological issues, this chapter demonstrates the fact that Jesus shared his hearers' process of communication in order to engage with them in their search for meanings. Consideration is given to the problems of the previous interpretations that were influenced by the instrumental and effect-centred approach of communication. Most of them assumed that Jesus used the parable as a means of informing or of revealing a particular message to his audience. Some of them attempted to trace certain moral and universal values in the parables. It is argued that the meanings of the parables does not merely derive from the content or from the context but also arises during the interaction between Jesus and his hearers and from their participation in the ongoing process of communication.

By using the parable of the Good Samaritan as a specific example, it is demonstrated that Jesus was not merely a sender but was a participant along with his audience in their communication process. He interacted with his hearers on three levels - with their belief; with their medium and with their social and cultural context. He used his hearers' religious expressions and by sharing their beliefs. He displayed the characters, genre and aesthetic elements of parabolic communication that were familiar to his hearers. He began his parabolic communication from his hearers' situation in order to interact with them. It is argued that this particular interaction through the parable of the Good Samaritan cannot be seen as an isolated

event but needs to be seen within the historical process. Because of its explicit portrayal of the interactive character of Jesus' communication, the parable of the Good Samaritan and its context as in Luke 10:25-37 has been selected for this study.

The dialogue and the parable provided a theological foundation for the parable in which expressions such as eternal life, law and neighbour and their meanings were co-related. These expressions were interpreted in a variety of ways at the time of Jesus and his hearers were exposed to a multiplicity of meanings. Among such diversity of meanings, Jesus presented his own meanings of the word 'neighbour' in an indirect way using the parable. The parable did not convince the lawyer through intellectual argument, or by imparting information, but enabled him to play the roles in the parable and thus read himself into it. The parable also presents its meanings of the word 'neighbour' in an attractive manner using aesthetic elements and a genre that can maintain the attention of the listener.

There was a need to identify such meanings at the time of Jesus because of the changing social context. The parable of the Good Samaritan indirectly addressed certain issues of social change such as the Samaritans' presence in Judaea and the presence of Jewish immigrants outside Jewish territory. The parable of the Good Samaritan reflected his hearers' context and addressed the social issues, particularly reflecting the situation and the event in the life of a traveller on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. It reflected the condition of certain people who were robbers and the condition of the temple authorities who were negligent of a suffering man. The parable also pointed indirectly to the attitude of the Jews towards non-Jews, particularly towards Samaritans. It also addressed issues such as the relationship among neighbours which is determined by the situation rather than by religion or by

identity. Jesus was conscious of the social issues faced by his hearers and addressed them. Even though the parable of the Good Samaritan did not address all the issues it raised, its meanings were presented in such a way that the lawyer could identify the meanings that were relevant to his context.

Jesus' parables mostly used contemporary characters and events. It can be argued that he used their forms, genre and aesthetic elements to capture and maintain their attention. Thus he presented his meanings among other meanings in an attractive and challenging way so that his audience could accept them without making generalisation about other groups. For example, he was not explicitly critical of the roles of the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus enabled the lawyer to discover meanings for himself by encouraging him to play the different roles in the story and thus read himself in it.

These three aspects of parabolic communication are identified in order to show the participation of Jesus in his hearers' process. By demonstrating the fact that Jesus took part in his hearers' process, this chapter highlights the importance of engaging with the audience by sharing their beliefs, by joining in their communication process and by reflecting and addressing their social issues. Christian communication should be understood as an ongoing process, in which the communicator and the audience share, participate and interact in order to construct meanings for their beliefs and for their life. These factors of interactive communication are similar to that of the interactive communication approach developed in Chapter 2 using Carey's cultural approach and Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication.

In the next chapter, the task is to bring together the theological basis that was developed in Chapter 2 with the result of the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Chapter 3 and to analyse this interaction within the wider context of Jesus' teachings. This will be essential to demonstrate the fact that Jesus' communication is not only participatory and interactive but is also indirect and non-judgemental. Following this a number of principles of Christian communication will be developed. The fifth chapter will deal with the practical application of these principles and their relevance to the context of Christian communication in India.

Chapter 4

Jesus' Parables and Principles of Christian Communication

1. Introduction

The writers of the church reports and interpreters of parables share a common approach to communication. Their basic assumption is that the communicator is seen as the primary source of communication while audiences are receivers. In this sense God plays the role of a sender while human beings are seen as receivers. The synoptic parables are thus understood by the interpreters as forms of communication through which Jesus communicated the secrets of the kingdom or about God. The interpreters have searched for meanings in the content or structure of the parables, or in the context of other teachings of Jesus as communicated to his hearers. Having received the message, the churches and their interpreters act as primary sources of communication to their members and to those outside their fellowship. The churches see themselves as senders of the message in order that their audience might receive them faithfully.

In the theoretical understanding of communication undertaken in my study, communication is defined as a process in which communicator and the audience share, participate and interact among themselves. From this perspective Jesus is seen as a participant in the human communication process. To interact with his audience, Jesus had to use the parabolic forms so that he could get their attention and enable them to interpret their beliefs. The previous chapter has pointed out that Jesus participated in his hearers' process of communication by using their forms of

communication. By sharing his hearers' beliefs, he interpreted the meanings of their religious expressions and beliefs. He interacted with their worldview by reflecting and addressing their social and cultural concerns in his parables. These three characteristics of interactive communication are identified in the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In this chapter the main task is to identify the principles behind Jesus' interaction with his hearers through the parables so that they can be translated into principles of Christian communication. Jesus shared his hearers certain religious expressions, worldviews and forms of communication. Even though he did not convince all his hearers, not even all his disciples, he still tried to interact with them so that they would develop certain meanings from his parables.

By sharing and by participating in his hearers' process of communication regardless of their limitations, Jesus interacted with them indirectly. To interact indirectly, Jesus had to listen, learn and thus begin from his hearers' state of understanding and belief. This process of communication was one of the social processes in which Jesus and his hearers participated. Meanings of the religious expressions and worldviews at the time of Jesus evolved from different processes in which people were involved. Jesus' use of parables shows that he was aware of the presence of a multiplicity of worldviews and religious meanings. He placed his views and meanings among a wide range of worldviews and religious meanings in an attractive manner.

In this chapter, while referring to other parables and teachings, it will be argued that Jesus began his interaction from the position of his hearers. Thus participating in their social process of communication he encouraged them to

participate along with him. These principles of parabolic communication will be analysed in this chapter in order to relate them to the findings of chapters 2 and 3.

2. Jesus Began His Communication From His Hearers

In the previous chapter it has been argued that through his parables Jesus participated with his hearers in their search for the relevance of their beliefs. The primary task in this section is now to highlight the limitations in the human communication process reflected in the interaction between Jesus and his hearers. Some characteristics of the parables show that Jesus began his communication from his audience's standpoint. In other words, the language that Jesus used came out of the community in which he and his audience lived. It appears that segments of the public were attracted by Jesus' use of common characters, forms and aesthetic elements. This method facilitated to interaction with the beliefs of the audience. In some instances Jesus realised that his hearers did not understand the meanings in the parables (e.g. Mk 8:15).

Even though he recognised the limitations of his parabolic communication, he continued to use it to enable the audience to interpret and reinterpret their beliefs. As both communicator and audience both participate in the parable by interacting and sharing meanings, there is no single flow of information from the communicator to the audience. The meanings arise from within the community, audiences would presumably have been familiar with the basic concepts. Jesus' parables highlight these meanings so that the audience might become aware of them by imagining the plot and by identifying with certain roles in the parables.

A. The Role of Religious Expressions and Characters

Most of the religious expressions, the characters, and the meanings and forms that Jesus used in his parables were familiar to his audiences. In the parable of the Good Samaritan expressions such as *eternal life, law, and neighbour* and characters such as *priest, Levite, and Samaritan* were known to Jesus' audience were familiar to Jesus' hearers¹⁰⁵. Even though the meanings that were associated with these words were diverse among the audience, Jesus used each of them by attaching a particular significance to it. This is true for most of the synoptic parables, in which the religious expressions and characters are taken from the audience's context.

The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector highlights certain meanings of prayer by contrasting the attitude to the two characters, (Lk 18:9-14). These characters have wide-ranging roles in Jewish society and thus represent a wide range of meanings. Long after Jesus, Josephus reported that Pharisees were a body of Jews with the reputation for excelling the rest of the nation in the observance of religion (BJ 1.110). In Luke they are shown on the one hand as friendly (they invited Jesus to their house), and on the other as confronting groups (they tested him). Luke recognises a certain affinity between Jesus and the Pharisees (7:36; 14:1) but includes strong criticism of the Pharisees (7:30; 11:39-44; 12:1). Their image among the Jewish public is positive while that of tax collectors is generally negative. In the synoptic gospels, the tax collectors are grouped together with sinners¹⁰⁶. But in this parable the prayer of the tax collector is accepted because of its humble nature whereas the Pharisee's prayer is not.

In the context of the parable, the words of the tax collector are shown as an example of prayer. Fitzmyer [1985:1183] argues that through this parable Jesus

defended his attitude towards Pharisees and tax collectors. At the same time Jesus attempted to interact with the Pharisees rather than confront or portray them with another negative image. Nolland [1993:874] notes that the opening view in which Pharisees are good and the tax collectors are bad, has not been overturned. The story gently led the hearers to the place where hidden flaws in the Pharisees' teachings were exposed. The meanings associated with the character of a Pharisee arise from the community and stand sharply against the meanings that arise from the context of the parable. However its meanings cannot be generalised for all contexts, that is, not all Pharisees would pray like the one in the parable. In this sense meanings associated with these characters are relevant in so far as they contribute to the overall points of the parable.

If the perspectives of audiences were different then the meanings arising from the parables might also vary. Jesus seemed to have realised that such differences in meanings can lead to a variety of understandings of the parables. When he told them, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" (Mk 8:15), his disciples were thinking about the bread which they had forgotten to bring. They identified the meaning of this saying from a different perspective whereas Jesus was talking about Pharisees. In this parable, the symbol of leaven is linked with a negative meaning. Drury [1985:33] points out that yeast was an image of badness in Mark (8:15; Mt 16:6; Lk12:1) whereas Matthew has a little parable in which leaven is good (13:33). For Drury, Matthew referred it to the mysteriously expansive power of the kingdom of heaven. This implies that the meanings of the characters such as rich man or leaven through which Jesus intended to convey were not always the same as the meanings which audiences developed from them. This reveals the limitations

of human communication in which a word or a symbol refers to one thing in one context and to something else in another. Even though Jesus became aware of this limitation and the diversity of meanings that arise out of the communication process, he continued to interact with his hearers through parables.

B. The Role of the Parabolic Form and of Aesthetic Elements

Not only the characters (e.g. rich man and Lazarus) but also the genre (story form) play an important role in interpreting the meanings of these religious expressions (Hades). The narrative form of a parable brings them together and enables the listeners to search for the meanings that are relevant to their religious and social context. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, the structure of the story and the plot play an important role in adding meanings to the characters such as *the king*, *the servant* and to religious expressions such as *forgiveness* (Mt 18:23-34). This parable does not give a straightforward answer to Peter's question but interprets the meanings that are associated with the word 'forgiveness'.

At times the structure and the plot can also lead to a widening of the meanings. In the Parable of the Weeds, Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven with the one who sowed the good seed in his field (Mt 13:24). His disciples asked him to explain this parable (Mt 13:36). This parable did not directly or explicitly relate the meanings of the characters (of the one who sowed the good seed and his enemy) to the characteristics of the kingdom. These characters (e.g. enemy, labourers, man who sowed) can interpret the concept of and beliefs in the kingdom of God. They enable the hearers to see themselves through the parable and realise their position in the

kingdom. The allegorical interpretation (Mt 13:37-43) highlighted one set of meanings by comparing the characters of the other world (angel, son of man).

Boucher [1977:21] notes two levels of meaning in the parable of Weeds. The man allows the weeds to grow together until the harvest, when they are separated and burned. For Boucher at one level the parable teaches how God permits good and evil to co-exist until the end of time, when they are divided at the judgement. Further meanings could be developed from the structure of the story such as: the owner was not aware of his enemy's activities and his enemy sowed weeds because he slept during the night without protecting the seeds that he planted. The structure and plot of the parables enable the hearers to develop further meanings while helping them to interpret their beliefs. It is not only the structure and plot of the parables but also the immediate context in which they are told, which add meanings¹⁰⁷.

Along with the plot, Jesus' parables displayed aesthetic elements in order to attract the attention of the audience. Many of them started with suspense, created a crisis, reversed the normal expectations, and ended without solving the issues raised. Drury [1985:12] identifies the crises in the parables. For Drury [1985] the crisis in the Good Samaritan occurs when the traveller is left half dead at the road side; in the story of the friend at night, it is rousing the neighbour; and in the Rich Man and Lazarus it is the rich man's ignorance of the crisis before him in the presence of Lazarus at his gate. Crossan [1973:68] points out that in the reversal of the human situation the kingdom's disruptive advent could be metaphorically portrayed and linguistically made present. Some of these parables begin with a question like suspense¹⁰⁸.

The main task of these aesthetic elements is to attract the attention of the audience, to enable the audience to imagine and feel the imaginary context of the story¹⁰⁹ and make them search for the meanings that are relevant to their beliefs and their contexts. Thus the purpose of the parables was not to impart information but to encourage the audience to see themselves in the stories and to enable them to interpret their own beliefs. This needs audience involvement with Jesus in the parabolic form of communication. When he started telling his parables, he could immediately capture their attention.

An illustration of this cultural interaction can be seen in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31). The story form relates the meanings of the religious expressions such as Hades and bosom of Abraham to the meanings of the characters such as rich man and Lazarus (poor man). The reversal in life after death is the primary plot that adds further meanings to the story. The plot, structure, and the context contribute to the overall meanings of the parable and enable the audience to interpret their beliefs in life after death. Bauckham [1991:233] argues that the theme of eschatological reversal, which is described as God's justice after death, was popular among Jewish audiences. Jeremias [1963:183] points out that the first part of the parable derived from an Egyptian folk tale¹¹⁰. The story was perhaps already known to Jesus' hearers and immediately brought them into an encounter with its meanings.

With the reversal in plot the story enables the hearers to play the roles of the characters, interpret their beliefs and share their wealth with the poor. The story form and the structure provide two or more possible levels of meanings. Jeremias notes this as a contradiction by stating:

Quite apart from the contradiction in the context (Lk 16:14f), where has Jesus ever suggested that wealth in itself merits hell, and that poverty in itself is rewarded by paradise? What v.25 really says is that impiety and lovelessness are punished; and that piety and humility are rewarded [1963:185].

Jeremias' argument points to the fact that the parabolic form enables the hearer to develop a variety of meanings. These meanings could result in a contradiction of understanding and thus lead to a need for further interaction. Crossan [1973:68] argues that the end section in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) refers to resurrection.

The meanings that arise from the content of the parable enable the audience to interpret their beliefs in a variety of ways. After interacting with a rich man, Jesus looking at him said (Lk 18:25), "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God". Then Peter told Jesus that the disciples had left their homes to follow him. Jesus assured them of a good reception in the age to come. Here Jesus asked the rich man to distribute his wealth to the poor and he gave an assurance to the disciples. In this sense a poor man among the audience might have recognised the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus as an assurance of a place in the bosom of Abraham. The aesthetic elements and narrative form are used in the parable to get the attention of the audience and to enable them to recognise certain meanings of religious expressions that are relevant to their context.

C. The Role of the Audience

The meanings arise not only from the characters and from the context of the story, but also from the context and perception of the audience. When Jesus went to Nazareth and began to teach in the synagogue on the Sabbath, his audience did not

believe in his words (Mk 6:6; Lk 4:23). Even though they recognised the wisdom in his teaching and his miracles, they did not believe in him because he belonged to their place (Mk 6:2). Their context influenced their perception of Jesus and their attitude towards his teachings. After he referred them to a proverb, the audience in his own country was filled with wrath and attempted to kill him (Lk 4:28-9).

The meanings of his teachings could also vary according to the perceptions of the audience. When Jesus told the parable of the wicked tenants, the chief priests and the Pharisees recognised that he was speaking about them (Mt 21:45 - in Lk 20:19 and Mk 12:12 they were identified as the chief priests and the scribes). They did not arrest him because of fear of the multitude who held him to be a prophet (Mt 21:46). For some of the audiences he was a prophet and for some he was an enemy. Some of them came to test him and others came to learn from him (Mt 16:1; 13:2).

Even among the audience in a particular place there were different religious groups such as Pharisees and Sadducees who differed in their beliefs and so in their construction of meanings of the teachings of Jesus. Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection (Mk 12:18-27; BJ 2.165; Ant 18.16) whereas Pharisees do (BJ 2.164; Ant 18.14). The Sadducees' question about the resurrection in Matthew (22:24) shows that they were present in the audience. Their view about Hades in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus would be different from that of the Pharisees. Their religious affiliation also contributed to the construction of meanings in communication.

D. The Role of Jesus

It is argued that there was a wide range of meanings arising from the content and context of the audience when Jesus interacted with them through a parable. This interaction enabled some of his audience to interpret their beliefs and to follow him. Some of them did not understand or become aware of the meanings that he wanted them to develop from the parable¹¹¹. To enable them understand, he had to continue to interact with them, that is, to begin his communication from their standing point. To do this, he had to use the characters, the religious expressions and the forms that were familiar to the audience. While sharing with his hearers he also became aware of limitations, yet he continued to engage with them in their communication process through the parables. This process did not happen in a vacuum but at a particular time and at a particular context. It intersects other processes, such as social gatherings in synagogues, in public or in the temple.

In order to participate in his hearers' processes, Jesus began his communication from where they were. He preached in the synagogues according to the custom and practice of the gathering on the Sabbath (Mt 4:23; Mk 1:21; Lk 4:16). He also spoke to the crowds on the mountain (Mt 5:1; 7:28; plain in Lk 6:17), in the temple (Lk 20:1) and from a boat on a beach (Mt 13:2). He interacted with his audience wherever they were. His interaction was often dialogic in nature. There are a number of instances in the gospels where Jesus and the Pharisees had dialogue over different religious and social issues (e.g. Mt 15:1, 16:1, 19:3, 22:16-17; Mk 10:2; Lk 17:20). He listened to his audience's critical remarks and then engaged with them in the search for meanings of religious expressions.

Often such a context was the starting point of a parable. In Luke (15:1-2) the Pharisees and the scribes criticised Jesus for receiving sinners and for eating with them. Jesus told them the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son in order to defend his attitude towards sinners and to invite Pharisees to join with him in welcoming the sinners. These examples show clearly that Jesus went to his audiences and began to interact with them from their situation. Even though at times his disciples did not understand his parables, he continued to participate in their process with the hope that they might become aware of the meanings that were relevant to their context. As suggested earlier he seems to have recognised the difference in the context of the audience and its influence on their acceptance of his teachings (Mt 11:21-23; Lk 10:13-16).

It is argued that the parables may enable the audience to interpret the meanings of their religious beliefs. The meanings of religious expressions and characters are diverse so that the audience might not understand or might misunderstand the meanings in the parables. The audience read their own meanings into the parable. All these meanings enable the audience to identify the overall meanings of the parable. In this sense Jesus' interaction with his audience through the parable might have resulted in multiplicity of meanings rather than a single meaning. It does not mean that the parables should be interpreted allegorically but rather should be seen as an outcome of an ongoing interactive process between Jesus and his hearers. In this section it has been argued that while interacting with his hearers Jesus seemed to recognise the limitations of the parabolic communication. Even though his audiences did not always recognise the points that Jesus wanted to convey through his teachings, he continued to engage in their process of

communication with a hope of interacting with them. In short, he began his communication from where his audiences were.

3. Jesus Began His Communication From the Context of His Hearers

Even before Jesus participated in his hearers' communication process, they were already engaged in a search for the meanings of their religious expressions. This can be seen in questions asked by various people in the gospels. Many of the synoptic parables not only mediated these meanings but also enabled his hearers to become aware of certain meanings that were relevant to their context. By enabling the hearers to see the importance of these meanings, the parables challenged their worldview and addressed some of the social issues. From a cultural perspective communication is defined as an ongoing process in which the communicator and the audience share, participate and interact among themselves [Carey 1989]. Because communication is one of the social processes, it can influence, and can itself be influenced, by any changes in the economic, political, religious or cultural processes and environment.

While resisting any external influences or changes, audiences engage in the communication process in order to reinforce or change their own beliefs and worldview. Carey [1989:18] describes communication as the act of maintaining of society, representing shared beliefs and of engaging in a sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality. In the interactive perspective it has been argued that if one of the social processes undergoes change the religious and communication processes would also be affected. If any change in one of the social processes affected the lives of audiences, they would try to find a way either to adapt

to or to resist this change by reinterpreting their religious expressions. They engaged in such interaction by using various forms of communication. The intersection between these processes and their influence on one another are very complex and it is not possible to predict the effect of Jesus' communication on his followers¹¹².

When their religious life was threatened by political or cultural changes, people in Judaea engaged in a search for religious meanings that would enable them either to adopt these changes or to resist them. Their religious teachers attempted to interpret certain religious expressions and related their meanings to their context. As the intensity of the effect of these changes varies with individuals, the extent of their participation in this search varies accordingly, as do the meanings that arise from their involvement. Bailey [1992:17] lists the various changes (political, economic, conceptual and legal) that might have occurred at the time of Jesus and their influence on his teachings. Even though his hearers were exposed to a wide range of meanings and changes at that time, Jesus enabled his hearers to realise certain meanings that were relevant to their own particular religious and social context.

To encourage his hearers to participate in the construction of meanings through the parables, Jesus engaged in their search and used their context as the framework of his communication. He recognised the changes in their context, the need for meanings relevant to these changes, and highlighted them in his parables. Thus he began his communication from the context of his hearers. The following section identifies the changes that occurred in the political and cultural context of Judaea, some of the meanings that arose from these changes and the way in which Jesus' parables tried to mediate and interpret those meanings. Although they are

considered separately, the political and cultural processes are not easily distinguishable one from the other.

A. Political Context

i. Changes

The political context of a society frequently intersects with the process of communication. Any change in the political context can influence religious beliefs and worldview. In this section it will be argued that in the Old Testament and Inter Testamental times some changes in the people's experiences and political context contributed to the reconstruction of meanings of certain religious expressions such as 'the covenant' and 'the kingdom of Yahweh'. In a similar way Beasley-Murray [1986:340] notes, "The Hebrew understanding of the 'kingship' of God was expanded and deepened through the people's experience of the exodus events". Changes in their political context, such as the division of the kingdom of Israel after Solomon, might have contributed to a search for reinterpretation of their beliefs in God's promises to Abraham (Gen 22:17-8) and to David (2 Sam 7:16).

Gowan [1986:34] argues that the break in the continuity of the Davidic dynasty brought about by the Babylonian triumph over Judah in 587 BCE might have caused the idealisation of the work of David or could have become the basis of hope for a better future (Lam 4:20). As the establishment of the Israelites' kingdom and the idea of God's covenant were related, any changes in the political system might have led to the rise of serious questions about God's promise of a Davidic kingdom and to a wide range of meanings about the kingdom.

Even before Jesus' time the political life of Judaea had undergone enormous changes that contributed greatly to the understanding of the kingdom. Following the Maccabean revolt, the Jews gained their independence with respect to their religious devotion. After 63 BCE Rome controlled Judaea indirectly first through one of the Hasmoneans, then through Herod and his successors, and eventually by direct rule under a Roman governor. These are some examples of the changes in the political life that led the Jewish people to search for meanings of the kingdom that was promised through the prophets. At the time of Jesus political life was mostly peaceful. Roetzel [1987: 17-9] points out that from 26 to 41 CE there were religious upheavals that raised tensions between the Roman rulers and the Jewish people¹¹³. These political tensions and other upheavals caused concern among the Jewish people and their religious teachers. They engaged in a search for meanings of the phrase 'kingdom' in relation to their context.

ii. Search for Meanings

The Old Testament books do not use the phrase 'the kingdom of God' even though in a few instances they relate meanings of the 'Israelite kingdom' with 'the kingdom of Yahweh'. By highlighting the use of this phrase 'kingdom of Yahweh' in the book of Chronicles, Selman points out that a few texts explicitly link the concept of God's kingdom with kingly rule [1989:167]. For example the writer of the Chronicles notes, "And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel" (1Chr 28:5). The Chronicler reflected the idea that God's rule would be made known through the Davidic dynasty. At the time of the Chronicler the idea of an ideal

Davidic kingdom could have been developed even in the midst of the failures of the kings who were descendants of David.

There was a growing interest in God's kingdom in the prophetic literature and in the Psalms. Besides Psalm 145, there are three other references to God's kingdom or God's throne (22:29; 45:7; 103:19). In Obadiah (vs.21) is reference made to God's kingdom. During this time the image of God might have been related to an image of a 'king'¹¹⁴ or that of a warrior in Isaiah (13:4-10). Since the time of the Psalms these images and their meanings have been familiar to Jewish audiences (e.g. Ps 96:10).

There are instances in the prophetic books in which the 'royal figure' can be understood as a representative of Yahweh in the kingdom¹¹⁵. For example Jeremiah declares, "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land" (23:5). God would raise up from David a king who would execute God's justice and righteousness. In some of these references it is not clear whether the king as a representative of God would restore God's rule throughout kingdom.

There are references which suggest that this would result in the restoration of an ideal Davidic kingdom, the return of scattered Israelites and the service of all the kingdoms on earth to the people of Israel. Amos (9) proclaims, "In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name, says the LORD who does this" (9:11-2). Some of these references point to the establishment of this kingdom through the

people of Israel¹¹⁶. From these references it can be argued that multiple meanings of Yahweh's rule might have been shared and developed during the time of prophets.

A different sort of image of 'kingdom' is apparent in the apocalyptic literature, particularly in the book of Daniel. In Daniel the earthly kingdoms are sharply contrasted with God's kingdom¹¹⁷. Several concepts regarding God's kingdom were well developed in the book of Daniel - e.g. God is active in all kingdoms (Dn 2:21); God will establish an everlasting kingdom through the son of man (Dn 7:13-14). From these references, it is possible to argue that the suffering that the Jewish community underwent during this time might have contributed to a widening of the meanings of God's rule and promise of the Davidic kingdom¹¹⁸. In the previous chapter Nickelsburg's argument has been used to support this interpretation of the meanings of the kingdom.

In the apocalyptic literature the meaning of 'kingdom' might have been closely related to the coming of God, the day of the Lord and the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Selman [1989:174] argues that God's rule and authority was not expressed merely in futuristic terms but was also demonstrated in and through his people (Dn 3:28-9; 6:26-7). Even though Selman notes the difference between God's kingly rule and the kingdom of God, this study argues that these meanings overlap each other, and that a diversity of meanings about God's kingdom might have been held concurrently¹¹⁹. In the Wisdom of Solomon is this phrase 'Kingdom of God' used (10:10), even though other references show this concept is widely shared during the Inter Testamental period (Tob 13:1; Wis 6:3 - 'God's kingdom').

The writer of the 4 Ezra relates the idea of the end of the age to the concept of God's kingdom, and so to his rule on earth, by saying, "Await your shepherd: he will

give you everlasting rest, because he who will come at the end of the age is close at hand. Be ready for the rewards of the kingdom, because the eternal light will shine upon you for evermore” (4Ezr 2:34-5). Meanings of God’s kingdom, the final judgement or reward and the end of the age began to overlap at this time. This shows a wide range of meanings which might have been added to the concept of God’s kingdom due to the political and social changes during the apocalyptic and Inter Testamental period.

The meanings of God’s rule shared by the Qumran texts can be interpreted in a number of ways. Vermes [1983:34] points out that the figure of a victorious and holy king appears in a Qumran composition (1QS 5:20-25). Beasley-Murray argues that the historical events in the lives of the Jewish people changed their understanding of God’s kingdom [1986:340]. By referring to some references from Qumran texts, he notes:

The emphasis in these (following) passages and those that speak of entrance into the ‘lot’ of angels suggests a guarantee of participation in the new world because it has already begun to be realized in the community” - e.g. 1QH 3:19f; 1QH 11:7-14 [Beasley-Murray 1986:50].

These references show that the meanings of God’s kingdom were developed in a number of ways by the writers of the Qumran community to meet the needs of their own context. They also show that the political changes might have led the mass of people to search for a realistic meaning without rejecting the apocalyptic expectations.

It can be argued that the phrase ‘Kingdom of God’ as such is not used in the Old Testament, particularly, as an eschatological concept. But the idea of Yahweh’s kingly rule through an Israelite king forms one of many streams of meanings that

were developed during the Old Testament and Inter Testamental period. According to the passages in Daniel some of the meanings that are related to God's rule or kingdom were apparent in nations other than Israel. Some were developed because in reality the expected ideal kingdom of David was not established and so the people of Israel might have searched for other meanings beyond an earthly kingdom. These meanings might have coexisted with an expectation of the ideal Davidic dynasty, thus giving rise to a wide range of meanings shared by Jesus' audience.

iii. Wide Range of Meanings

Even before Jesus' time there was a search for the meanings of the kingdom not only from different political perspectives but also from different religious perspectives. By this time a wide range of meanings were available to the Jewish people regarding the word 'kingdom' and its relation to political contexts. Jesus' hearers were engaged in a number of ways, while searching for the meanings of the kingdom. Roman rule became an inevitable reality that might have led people to search for the meanings of 'kingdom'. It is possible to argue that the kingdom of God could have been interpreted in terms of past events in the history of the Israelites, in the present contextual terms, and in terms of eschatological hope.

The synoptic gospels present Jesus as one who engages in this search along with his hearers and thus his teachings reflect their diverse views of the kingdom. They also show that Jesus' hearers were interested in the search for meanings of the kingdom. When this study talks about Jesus' hearers, it is of course aware of the fact that they may implicitly represent the gospel writers' audiences and their involvement. In Luke (17:20-21) the Pharisees asked Jesus about the advent of the

kingdom of God. In another context, Jesus told them a parable because his audience supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately (Lk 19:11). It is difficult to identify the audience in this context (Lk 19:7).

In this narrative Luke presents some of Jesus' audiences as if they might have held the view that the kingdom would appear at once. As noted in the previous chapter, this could be Luke's attempt to correct some of his audience's expectation of the kingdom and confirm a delay in the coming of the kingdom. Fitzmyer [1985:1229] highlights the need for vigilance, which adds the dimension of the proper conduct of human life, and thus implies a delay in the appearance of the kingdom.

The gospels show that Jesus' hearers might have had diverse views about the kingdom. In one instance Jesus seemed to have realised that some of his disciples did not understand his meanings of the kingdom (the sons of Zebedee - Mt 20:20-24; Mk 10:35-45). The question put by Pilate reflects the view of some of the hearers about Jesus and his teachings on the kingdom (Mt 27:11; Mk 15:2; Lk 23:3). The diversity of views of the hearers about Jesus and his teachings is summarised in the answers given by his disciples (Mt 16:14).

This study is aware of certain discussions about the kingdom among various scholars¹²⁰. Sanders [1985:141] recognises diverse meanings of the kingdom in the teachings of Jesus by highlighting five different characteristics¹²¹. By being critical of Perrin's emphasis on the existentialist application Beasley-Murray [1986:340] notes that the symbolism employed by Jesus with respect to the kingdom of God is many-sided. For him there is a transition from the use of myth and symbol relating to the

kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus to descriptions of the Parousia and the future kingdom of God [Beasley-Murray 1986:340-1].

Jesus' hearers were already engaged in a search for meanings of the kingdom. As the needs of their contexts change, their search and their understanding of the kingdom varies. Even the understanding of the word 'kingdom' in the teachings of Jesus cannot be reduced to a single stream as he engaged in his hearers' search for the meanings of the kingdom and thus reflected them in his teachings. Jesus' teachings mediate some of these meanings and try to interact with them through various forms of communication. Jesus began his teaching by sharing their beliefs in the kingdom. The purpose of his involvement is to interact with his hearers and to enable them to establish a relationship with God.

iv. Jesus' Participation in Their Search

Having recognised the issues that arose out of the context of his hearers, Jesus' presented his parables among other stories that were available to his hearers. His parables did not provide any information about the kingdom but rather enabled the hearers to become aware of certain meanings that were relevant to their context. This study agrees with Scott in his comment that states, "The parable (of the seed growing secretly) does not offer its hearer a definition of the kingdom nor tell what the kingdom is. Rather it offers a hearer a chance to define the kingdom" [1989:370]. He argues that the interpreter chose to describe how the parable creates meaning rather than accenting what it means [1989:420]. Jesus' hearers were expected to make sense of the story and its relationship with the polyvalent symbol - kingdom [1989: 62]. No single meaning of the kingdom can be derived from the parables, or

from the overall teachings of Jesus, because their purpose is to enable hearers to derive meanings that varied according to the differences in their contexts and understanding. Their involvement in the search for and in the construction of meanings of the kingdom in relation to their life and attitude is given more emphasis than arriving at a single meaning.

Jesus engaged in this ongoing search by highlighting certain meanings (his own) of the kingdom of God through a number of parables. Some of these meanings of the kingdom are neither new nor completely old. In the gospels Jesus told many parables relating the kingdom, and its activities, to his hearers' context. Many scholars attempted to identify the way in which Jesus understood the meanings of the kingdom [Dodd 1935, Jeremias 1963, Perrin 1963]. In the context of political uncertainties, his task was to enable his hearers to interpret their beliefs in the kingdom of God and to relate them to their social context. He engaged with his hearers in a search for the meanings that were related to the word 'kingdom'.

Through the parable of the mustard seed (Mt 13:31-2; Mk 4:30-2), Jesus enabled his hearers to see various meanings of the kingdom. Dodd argues that the main point is not a contrast between small and great results, but it is the growth up to a point at which the branches can shelter the birds [1935:190]. For him it reflects the prevailing idea of bringing vassal kings into the kingdom just like birds coming to the shrub (Dn 4:12; Ezk 17:23, 31:6). Jeremias [1963:153] argues that in Jesus' beginning the end is already implicit. He points out that Jesus not only proclaimed salvation but also pronounced judgement, a cry of warning and a call to repentance in view of the terrible urgency of the crisis [1963:160]. This parable enables the

audience to see the presence of the kingdom among the people while taking into account the future expansion of the kingdom.

The parable of the mustard seed points out how the kingdom can grow among his hearers. It is possible to see that this parable implicitly relates Jesus' ministry with the kingdom even though it does not explicitly establish a comparative link. Carson [1995:318] highlights the connection between the small beginnings taking place under Jesus' ministry and the kingdom in its future glory, whereas Beasley-Murray [1986:124] notes continuity between the seed and the grown plant (from Jesus' small band the mighty kingdom would emerge). Scott [1989: 386] points out three possible meanings that arise from the parable in relation to the kingdom. This study agrees with Scott that the hearer is left to make sense of the story and to connect the mustard seed with the great plant (G Th 20) and to see the meanings of the kingdom that arise out of this tension.

There are many possible meanings that a hearer can derive from this parable. One of those meanings could have been to highlight the importance of Jesus' ministry and the need for the hearers to respond to even a small beginning. Mark Bailey [1998:459] argues that this parable is a challenge to the hearers' misconception of the humble beginnings of Jesus' ministry and provides an assurance to his disciples about the continuity of this beginning with the absolute sovereignty of God that will be consummated at the end. The pattern of sowing and growth identified in the parable of the mustard seed presents a case to his hearers so that they might see the kingdom's operation in relation to their lives.

One of its purposes is to invite the hearers to participate in this growth of the kingdom. The parable attempts to bring the hearers into the story and enables them to

construct, in the midst of a whole range of meanings, their own meanings that would contribute to the growth of the kingdom. By sharing the eschatological characteristics of the kingdom, Jesus invited his hearers to participate in its growth. The contrast in the size of the mustard seed and its later growth enabled him and his hearers to search for meanings that would be relevant for them. While sharing his hearers' beliefs, Jesus tried, through the parables, to interact with the meanings that arise from the context of the audience. That is why it is argued that Jesus began his communication from his hearers' context.

B. Cultural Context

i. Changes

Any changes in the cultural process can have a wider implication for society as a whole and can even divide communities. These changes affect the interaction between the communities or among individual members. The communication process would not only reflect but also address these changes while developing meanings of the religious expressions. The efforts by non-Jewish rulers and other people to hellenise the Jews had a great impact on the political, cultural and religious context of Judaea. Since the time of Alexander Jewish culture had been influenced by the process of Hellenisation. Particularly during the time of Antiochus IV (167 BCE) the compulsory practices of Hellenism led to various revolts and wars in Israel [Roetzel 1987:14].

After studying this period, Hengel in his two volumes on *Judaism and Hellenism* [1974:110-30] claims that there is Greek influence on ideas of the Bible, the apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha. For Hengel, the erotic motifs in books such as

Esther, Tobit, Judith, and Bensira's acceptance of free will and 'Epicureanism' clearly highlights the impact of Hellenistic concepts on Jewish literature. But Feldman [1977:379] argues against this by pointing to the existence of erotic motifs in Egyptian and Persian sources. He also points out that the delicate balance between human freedom, divine providence and ethical ideas can be traced back to the Oral Torah [Feldman 1977:380]. Deducing the attitude of the Jewish population towards Hellenisation from the Inter Testament books is a complex issue. According to Hengel, even those movements that resisted Hellenisation such as Hasidism and apocalyptic Essenism, did not entirely shake off its influence on their thought.

Millar [1978: 3-16] provides evidence against Hengel from the Inter Testamental period to conclude that the non-hellenistic aspects of Judaism and the basic rules imposed by Ezra and Nehemiah remained in some parts of Judaea. Hengel, Felman and Millar recognise the fact that Hellenistic ideas and practices influenced Jewish culture and religion, and that from time to time there was resistance. This study argues that the attitude of some Jewish religious groups could have become exclusive as they tried to keep their religious beliefs and practices away from any assimilation of other cultures. A change in the cultural life of the people led them to develop a worldview in which one group might have been suspicious of the other. This can be seen in the attitude of the Pharisaic group towards tax collectors and sinners as reflected in the gospels.

It is possible to argue that some Jews might have seen the presence of the non-Jewish people in Judaea as an expression of foreign domination. There are references in the three synoptic gospels in which the Pharisaic group is presented as being critical of Jesus' association with sinners and tax collectors (e.g. Mk 2:16; Mt

9:11; Lk 5:30). It is difficult to determine whether the Pharisees excluded others (such as sinners and tax collectors) from their fellowship, due to the scarcity of sources about them. This study agrees with some recent studies that the portrayal of the Pharisaic group in the gospels has both positive and negative significance [Carroll 1988:620]. Guelich [1989:102] notes that the Pharisees were one of the leading Jewish parties alongside the Sadducees in Jesus' day. They were politically and religiously active during the time of Jesus [Schwartz (D) 1983:170].

Pharisees might have disregarded human relationships and the wider significance of the law (Mt 23:23,25). But this study agrees with Sanders [1985] that not all Pharisees held such views or influenced public opinion in this way. In the synoptic gospels they are shown as a group which criticised or excluded groups such as tax collectors (Mk 2:16) and sinners (Lk 7:39;15:2). Some of the questions attributed to Pharisees clearly suggest that tax collectors and sinners were seen by them as outcasts of society¹²². It can be argued that their attitude towards sinners and tax collectors might be due to fear of assimilating with the common people. Due to the process of Hellenisation and the fear of its influence, the Pharisees may have established a boundary around themselves which in turn might have led them to generalise about 'others'.

In discussions about the Pharisees, this study is aware of the argument made by Saldarini [1988, 1992] regarding the synoptic gospels' portrayal of this group. He notes that, "The gospels and Acts do not easily provide information for the historical understanding of the Pharisees....they project onto the life of Jesus later controversies between the Christian and Jewish communities..."[1992:295]. There are differences in the portrayal of the Pharisees between Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Luke stereotypes Jesus' opponents [Saldarini 1988:181]. Nolland [1989:234] points out that the presence of the Pharisees and the scribes from every village of Galilee and Judaea is part of Lukan schematisation, that is, "Jesus' encounter with the whole of Pharisaism". This study considers the groups of Pharisees as representative of Jesus' opponents who might have shared some of the Pharisaic views and beliefs, while agreeing with the possibility of the gospel writer's construction of the image of this group in particular narratives.

Commenting on Mark 2:16, some scholars have pointed out that this story reflects the debates within the early Church between Jewish and Gentile Christians over the issue of table fellowship [Guelich 1989:102 referring to Gnllka 1961: 106]. Some others [Hultgren 1979] argue that this reflected the debate between the church and Judaism which accused the church of taking into its fellowship sinners (עֲשֵׂי תַּאֲרָיָה). Hultgren claims, "Mark 2:15-17 was composed, then, and put to use in defending the church's admission of disreputable - in the eyes of opponents - persons into its fellowship" [1979:111].

The synoptic gospels portray the Pharisees as the group that wants to question, test and learn from Jesus. Neusner [1973:88] argues that the Pharisaic practice of table fellowship placed more emphasis on ritual purity than on group identity. For him [1973:83] questions about table fellowship were present among the Pharisaic group even before 70 CE. Yet the possibility of the debates between Jesus and the Pharisees representing of early church debates with Judaism cannot be ruled out. In such cases those who carried on Jesus' tradition, and the gospel writers themselves, continued to participate in the construction of meanings in order to relate them to their respective contexts.

ii. Jesus' Participation in Their Search

A few examples will show that Jesus does not try to portray the Pharisees entirely negatively but also helps them to become more aware of the 'lost ones'. Meier [1994:316] points out that there is in Jesus' teachings coherence and discontinuity with his contemporaries. The synoptic gospels show that Jesus wanted the Pharisees to change their exclusive attitude towards tax collectors and sinners and become good shepherds. Bailey [1992:64] argues that in Luke 15 Jesus addressed the Pharisees and scribes as if they were shepherds. The bad shepherd who did not really care for his sheep properly, lost one of them. He became the good shepherd who paid a high price to find the sheep and carried it home over the rugged hills. Bailey also notes that the return of the lost sheep was an occasion for joy not only for the shepherd but also for the community [1992:81]. This is one of the meanings, highlighted by Bailey, that arise from the parable of the lost sheep.

On the one hand Jesus wanted tax collectors and sinners¹²³ to repent and accept the kingdom, but on the other hand he encouraged the Pharisees to receive them back with joy. In Mark (12:34) Jesus told a scribe that he is not far from the kingdom. His attitude towards scribes and Pharisees is not merely negative. While being critical of Pharisees (Mt 23:26), lawyers (Lk 11:45) and scribes (Mk 12:40) in some instances he is encouraging a view which is potentially more positive towards 'others' (such as tax collectors and sinners). Perrin [1967] attempts to interpret the cultural status of the word 'sinners'. He gives three different possibilities of their status; that they are Jewish sinners, Gentile sinners or Jews who made themselves Gentiles [Perrin 1967:93-102]. Luke notes that Tax collectors abused the system and exploited the masses (Lk 3:13). Thus for the Jewish public, they had a status

equivalent to sinners. According to Luke some Pharisees might have argued with Jesus that no tax collector or sinner was eligible to sit with him or hear his teachings (15:2).

Through the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector Jesus challenged their generalisation (Lk 18:9-14). The parable does not generalise the fact that all the Pharisees would pray like the Pharisee in the story. His aim was to enable the Pharisees to pray in a humble manner like that of the tax collector. Jesus highlights the point that the Pharisees themselves can learn from the tax collector's prayer. From his point of view both are learners in relation to the kingdom and its meanings. Receiving the tax collectors and sinners back into the community did not mean to receive them back into Pharisaic standards of purity but to recognise them as part of the community of God. Through the parables he enables them to break down their own boundaries.

In this way the gospel writers present Jesus as one who invited the Pharisees to recognise the search of many tax collectors and sinners for the meanings of their religious beliefs. Thus the parables in Luke 15 are aimed at Pharisees according to Luke's editorial introduction. The evangelists may sharpen this motif but Jesus' parable does seem to be aimed at widening his hearers' worldview and encouraging his hearers to recognise the importance of the return of the younger son. If this is the case with tax collectors and sinners, then Jesus may also have wanted his hearers to widen their view of the Gentiles and Samaritans¹²⁴. As pointed out in the previous chapter, in Luke Jesus enabled the lawyer to see the real meaning of eternal life through the character of a Samaritan.

Resistance to Hellenisation caused some Jewish groups to promote piety which emphasised the differences between observant pious Jews and outsiders. This shows an exclusive view of one group over another in the Jewish community. It was not only the Pharisees who were involved in the search for the meanings of religious expressions but also others, including tax collectors, sinners, Samaritans and Gentiles. In order to interact with them, Jesus went to the places they frequented. When Jesus sat and ate with sinners, his critics, who were already engaged in a similar search for meanings of certain religious expressions such as 'forgiveness', raised those issues with Jesus. While engaging with the tax collectors and sinners, Jesus invited his critics, through the parables, not to stand outside but to join him in the celebration of their return. His parables show that he was aware of the meanings arising out of the changes in the cultural processes. He indirectly addresses the cultural issues by enabling his critics to engage in the ongoing search along with 'others'.

C. Jesus presents His Own Meanings among Other Meanings

These are a few examples of various social processes that might have influenced the process of communication of Jesus' hearers. Other processes both economic and religious, might also have contributed to the search for meanings. The extent of these changes in the social processes varied according to time and place, and thus their influence on Jesus' hearers. Without recognising their political and cultural meanings, Jesus might not have been able to interact with them in this way. The parables did not only reflect the social contexts but also enabled the hearers to examine some of these issues from a different perspective. Jesus participated in his

hearers' ongoing search and helped them to become aware of certain meanings that were relevant to their context. Jesus was continually interacting with his hearers even though some of them might not have experienced similar problems in their context. His teaching at a particular time to a particular group might not be relevant for another group in a different context. Yet he continued to interact with his hearers regardless of their identity and perceptions.

In order to become aware of political and cultural issues and the ongoing search of his audience, he went to a Pharisee's house to have dinner (Lk 14:1) and also ate with tax collectors and sinners (Mt 9:10). He had to explain to a Pharisee the reason for allowing a sinful woman to wash his feet with her tears (Lk 7:37-50). While accepting her action, he wanted the Pharisee to see her action from a broader perspective of God's forgiveness. By participating in his hearers' search for meanings he could enable them to become aware of certain meanings. He presented those meanings among various other meanings that were available to his hearers. He did not criticise or dismiss other meanings even though they were irrelevant and useless for his hearers' context. Thus he began his communication from his hearers' context.

4. Jesus Began From the State of His Hearers' Belief

The first section examined the meanings that arose from the interaction between Jesus and his hearers through the parables. The meanings not only arose from the content but also from the context of the communicator and hearers. The second section described Jesus' communication within the context of other social processes. While his hearers were exposed to a wide range of meanings arising from

various social processes, Jesus enabled them to see certain meanings that were relevant to their context. He used their context as the framework of parabolic communication. In this section the emphasis is on the way in which the parables enabled hearers to interpret their belief and to relate it to the contextual meanings. Synoptic parables present an imaginary reality in which the audience can see their belief and become aware of its relevance to their context.

A. Sharing the Hearers' Belief

i. Belief in Hearers

Some of the synoptic parables show that Jesus began his interaction with his hearers by sharing their beliefs and religious expressions¹²⁵. One of the tasks of the parable is not to make the hearers believe either in the kingdom or in life after death, but rather to enable them to relate their belief to their context. In some instances, the synoptic gospels show Jesus as one who recognises people's faith in God. When a centurion said to Jesus that he was not worthy to have him under his roof, Jesus replied, 'not even in Israel have I found such faith' (Mt 8:10; Lk 7:9).

In a few instances Jesus seems to acknowledge an individual's faith as his/her choice (Mk 5:36, 9:23, 10:52; Mt 8:13; Lk 8:50, 18:42). It is difficult to identify whether this belief refers to faith in Jesus that he can heal them (Mt 9:28) or that God can heal them (Lk 11:20). This act of believing depends on each individual in a particular religious community in which such religious expressions are shared, used and interpreted. McFague defines belief as a process of coming to belief through the ordinary details of life [1975:3]. By coming to believe, every human being attempts to imagine God through the available expressions, means and forms of

communication. Believing in God is an individual's decision even though religious communities provide a framework for belief. By accepting belief as an individual's choice, Jesus used parables to bring the hearers to see the wider relevance of their belief in God.

ii. Religious Expressions and Beliefs

In order to interact with their religious faith, Jesus used the expressions that were familiar to his hearers. These expressions cannot adequately convey belief as a package of information. Reese [1984:141] argues that religious symbolism is by nature polyvalent, it conveys the sense of mystery as inexhaustible truth. He also notes that statements about God reveal him to a limited degree, proportionate to the human capacity to understand [Reese 1984:112]. It is essential to realise the human limitation within which Jesus attempted to interact with his hearers' beliefs. Jasper notes:

Whatever image we may use is both true and untrue, for if we see God as Father, we need also to see him as King, ...then also the God of vengeance, and of love, and so on, ...the word 'God' actually stands outside ordinary language altogether [1987:38].

Even though religious expressions such as 'kingdom of God' and 'eternal life' enable one to enrich one's belief, one can communicate them with the available characters, forms and means.

Whenever Jesus interacted with his hearers' belief, he used the metaphors, characters and parabolic forms that were familiar to them. For McFague, believing has a narrative quality which moves from the unsurprising to the surprising, with the complexity and ambiguity, the insights and the setbacks of a story [1975:84].

Metaphorical language provides a link between life and belief. On the one hand some parables display a familiar context in order to interpret belief, and on the other hand some of them interpret belief in order to understand real life.

In some parables, beliefs associated with certain religious expressions are interpreted through characters or metaphors (e.g. the kingdom parables such as the parable of a Seed and of a Pearl). In other parables, religious belief provides a background to the plot of the story in order to enable the hearers to identify its relevance and to challenge their worldview (e.g. the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus and of the Good Samaritan). In still other parables belief is displayed as a persuading factor in order to enable the hearers to relate their beliefs to their context (e.g. the parable of the unmerciful servant and the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector collector).

The number of parables used by Jesus indicates that he might have preferred this form of communication. Jasper [1987] points out that the language of parable works at two distinct levels; one that is familiar to experience and the other realised in the imagination. The parables were one of the various forms through which Jewish communities tried to share, communicate and interact their religious beliefs. Among a number of different means of communication the parables were preferred by Jesus to describe the unfamiliar world of belief in terms of the familiar. McFague points out that in the parables the unfamiliar is the context, the interpretative framework for the understanding of life in this world [1975:6]. The process of hearing and participating in the parables takes place through imaginative participation.

The parables displayed religious expressions that were familiar to the Jewish audience. The variety of meanings that arose from the characters, genre and aesthetic

elements of the parable were linked with religious expressions. Thus the parables enabled the hearers to read themselves in the plot, recognise and interpret their beliefs, and relate them to their context. Jesus' parables do not impart any belief about God's kingdom or in life after death to the hearers purely as information [Keck 1971:244]. They enabled Jesus and his hearers to interact through their forms and meanings but did not directly teach about religious expressions. Jesus interacted with his hearers through such an imaginative context even though it did not adequately interpret their belief.

iii. Belief in Life After Death

In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), Jesus shared a belief in life after death with his hearers [Joshva 1998:22]. The story does not demonstrate or prove that there is a life after death. It does not provide a rational argument in favour of the existence of Hades. Here belief is not interpreted but remains as a framework for developing meanings that could challenge people like the rich man. Jeremias [1963:183] asserts that Jesus did not intend to give teaching about the after-life nor did he wish to comment on a social problem. Jesus related the parable to warn his hearers who resembled the brothers of the rich man of the impending danger. But this presumably implies that such people ignored belief in rewards and punishments related to social behaviour.

The parable reflects his hearers' belief in life after death but does not pass on any information about it. The story also assures the poor man of a reversal of fortunes in life after death. The parables present the best case for sharing, interpreting and communicating beliefs and religious expressions for Jesus. Marshall [1978:637]

notes that the dead are visualised in bodily terms since there is no other way in which they can be visualised. The story presents an inescapable imaginative reality in which the hearers are left to identify their belief and to relate it to the contextual meanings.

One of the tasks of this parable is to provide a shock to the hearers' belief and thus attempt to change rich people's attitude towards the poor. The parable relates the belief in life after death to the social meanings that arise from the context of the hearers. Scott [1994:146] recognises the fact that in a context where wealth threatens the community, God is to be seen on the side of the poor. The parable not only presents a warning to those who benefit economically from the status quo, as Nolland [1993:832] points out, but also warns them of the certainty of future reversal.

According to the parable, the life of the hearers will be reversed after death if they do not share their wealth with the poor. It presents a warning to the hearers, not as a persuasive principle, but by taking the hearers into the arena of belief within which it challenges their social meanings. Fitzmyer [1985:1129] argues that the rich man faces a crisis in his life and does not realise it. It does not simply illustrate the prudent use of material wealth, but is also concerned about the rich man's status after death and about the status of the poor man in this life. These characters, genre and aesthetic elements in this parable enable Jesus to bring the hearers into the story and leave them in their imagination to search for meanings that are relevant to their belief and to their context. The parable continues with the request of the suffering rich man to Abraham¹²⁶.

The parable does not provide a solution to the social problem of rich and poor nor does it designate Jesus as one who came back from the rich man to his brothers. It does not teach about life after death. It does not propose a reality in which the poor

would become rich and rich would become poor [Scott 1994:146]. One of its meanings is that the rich should share their wealth with the poor so that they might avoid the experience of torment in Hades in the life after death. His hearers' belief and the meanings that arise from their context are brought together by the parable so that the hearers might interpret their belief and share their material wealth with their poor neighbours. Jesus had to recognise his hearers' belief in order to share and use their religious expressions as communicated in a parabolic form. Even though the parables displayed imaginative characters and realities to enable the hearers to interpret their beliefs, Jesus recognised them as the best way to interact with his audiences.

B. Parable, Belief and Indirect Communication

The communicator and his message serve the purpose of enabling the hearers to interpret their beliefs, and of bringing them closer to God. In such a case both the communicator and the hearer are believers and learners in their respective processes. In order to interact with audiences the communicators need to engage in their search for meanings of life and beliefs and enable them to interpret while the communicators themselves are engaged in their own search for meanings. Some of the parables employ this indirect method of communication. For example, the parable of the sheep and the goats emphasises the eschatological characteristics of the kingdom (Mt 25:31-46). The parable does not give any details about 'the return of the Son of Man' except through the imagery of a king¹²⁷.

The parable challenged the hearers to do something for those who were hungry, thirsty and strangers. It described the day of 'the return of the Son of Man' in

his glory without giving any information about the day and the place, and at the same time demanded his hearers to see the people around them who did not have enough food and clothes. This indirect method of communication leaves the hearers to search for meanings and enables them to see the relevance of their beliefs to their context. Robinson [1956:237] argues that Matthew used this parable to present an ironic theme that means, on the one hand, the 'Son of Man' was rejected and goes to his own trial, and, on the other hand, this trial was to inaugurate his coming and his sitting in glory.

This narrative affirms the hearers' belief in the return of the Son of Man; and it also requires them to be prepared for his return. Jeremias [1963:209] notes that God's justification at the last judgement is based on the individual's living faith. Through the parables, Jesus shared his hearers' belief in the return of the Lord while he interpreted them through imaginative characters and context. This indirect method of communication brings the hearers into the story and enables them to search for meanings that are relevant to them.

In some parables the hearers' beliefs that are associated with certain religious expressions are interpreted in such a way that they become motivating factors in bringing about a change in social attitude. The parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:23-34) seems to demand that the hearers forgive as a response to God's forgiveness. Huffman [1978:213] points out that this extreme transposes the intent of the parable from the realm of human relationship to that of the human and divine. While commenting on Huffman, Davies and Allison [1991:796] argue that this comparison does not contain a 'one-to-one' correspondence between the actions of the king and the actions of God. Even though this parable cannot be allegorised, the

meanings that arise from its context enable hearers to see their act of forgiving in the light of God's forgiveness.

In this sense the imagination of the hearers is stretched outside their realm of thinking by presenting a contrast in the parable. Buchanan [1996:746] argues that the amount of the debt was made in hyperbolic proportions to dramatise the huge indebtedness of the one servant in contrast to the small loan of the other. This contrast is made to show that God's forgiveness is more vital than human forgiveness. Forgiving a fellow human being is seen in the light of the forgiveness of God, and the story attempts to relate hearers' belief in the forgiveness of God to forgiving others. Thus God's forgiveness is a motivating factor for man's forgiveness and so there is no question about the number of times one can forgive one's fellow.

Unless there is a belief that God has forgiven their sins or an experience of God's forgiveness in their lives, the audience might not accept the meanings that arise from the parable. Some of the hearers might consider forgiving others because they believe in God's forgiveness. The parable assumes that the hearers believe in God's forgiveness and does not explain how God forgives. It demands that the hearers forgive others without demonstrating belief in God's forgiveness, but assures them regarding God's forgiveness. On one hand the parable shares the hearers' belief that God forgives them; on the other hand the parable enables the hearers to interpret their belief through an imaginative context, characters and forms. It does not establish a direct link between the king's pardon and God's forgiving act. This is an indirect method of communication because a parable cannot provide any information about God or his forgiveness but enables the hearers to see their forgiving act in the light of their belief in God. This indirect method of communication is used to capture

the attention of the hearers and enables them to interpret their beliefs. It leaves the hearers to search for meanings and enables them to see the relevance of their beliefs within the realities around them, without questioning their beliefs in the return of the Son of Man in glory on his judgement day.

In order to experience his forgiveness and relationship, the hearer as well as the communicator has to stand alone before God. By communicating indirectly the parables take hearers to an imaginative world in which they are left to search for meanings on their own and to identify their belief and its relevance to their context. The parables can communicate indirectly and are more effective than other forms of communication. They enabled Jesus to begin his communication from the standpoint of his hearers' beliefs by displaying them through a imaginative reality and by enabling them to see the relevance of their beliefs to the contextual meanings.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of Jesus in using a parable is to capture the attention of his hearers, to enable them to play the roles in it, to interpret their beliefs and to renew their relationship with God and with their neighbours. Jesus began by sharing his hearers' belief, communicative forms and worldview, starting from the place where they were, and continuing to engage with them, regardless of the limitations. In using parables, Jesus is concerned first to capture the attention of his hearers and then to encourage them in a process of interpretation and reinterpretation. The meanings that arise from a parable are diverse as audiences bring their own meanings to it. In section one it has been argued that the meanings arise not only from the content but also from the overall context of Jesus' teachings and from the context of the hearers.

As noted in section two, Jesus presented his meanings among various other meanings that were available to his hearers. Without condemning other meanings, he could bring the hearers into a decision-making process through their imagination even though many of them might not have been convinced of his teachings. By reflecting a wide range of contextual meanings, some of the parables show that Jesus began his communication from his hearers' context which was constantly changing. The purpose of developing these meanings in the parable is to enable the hearers to reinterpret their beliefs and thus to relate them to their context. In section 3 Jesus' attempt to interact with his hearers' beliefs through the parables was analysed. It was noted that religious belief cannot be communicated except through the available expressions and can best be interpreted through metaphors and stories.

Jesus helped his audience to see the relevance of religious faith to their own situation. He began his communication from the state of his hearers' beliefs and effectively engaged in their search for the meanings of various religious expressions. Thus Jesus could interact with his hearers by beginning from the place where they were. These three characteristics of the parables support the argument that Jesus began his interaction from his hearers' communication process; he began his communication from their context; and he began his communication by sharing their beliefs. They also emphasise the importance of an interactive perspective with which Jesus participated in his hearers' process of communication. In order to relate these principles to the practice of Christian Communication, the next chapter will develop and analyse certain principles with particular reference to the video ministry of the Diocese of Tirunelveli.

Chapter 5.

The Relevance of the Principles to the Practice of Christian Communication in South India.

1. Introduction

The primary task in this chapter is to apply the principles of Christian communication that were developed in the previous chapters to the practice of Christian communication in South India. The need for such principles was identified by analysing some of the reports and documents of the World Council of Churches and of the Pontifical Commission. The problem with these approaches is not only with the basic understanding of communication but also with the theological basis that supports this understanding. In order to arrive at an interactive understanding of communication, a theological perspective was developed by bringing together Carey's cultural view of communication, Freire's understanding of Christian communication and Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication.

In order to relate this theological basis to communication practice, one of the parables of Jesus was analysed and certain principles were developed in Chapters 3 and 4. The first section of this chapter will highlight the practical application of the three principles that are developed from the study of Jesus' use of the parable of the Good Samaritan¹²⁸. The main argument is that if the churches had considered these principles and translated them into policies and strategies, then the interaction between the churches, their communicators and their audiences would certainly become effective and alive. By providing this theological basis, this study proposes

that the change in the process of Christian communication has to start from the theological institutions and church institutions.

The second section will analyse the communication practice of the diocese of Tirunelveli by way of studying its videocassette ministry in order to test the relevance of these principles in contemporary Christian media practice. Even though the WCC's reports and the Pontifical documents did not influence the policies and practices of many member churches or dioceses, the policy of Tirunelveli diocese with regard to communication is based on similar to that of the synod strategies of the Church of South India (CSI). A critical analysis of the videocassette ministry shows the importance of shifting the theological basis and of changing the perspective of communication from an instrumental and effect-centred approach to an interactive approach.

The video ministry will be critically analysed within the wider context of communication in South India. This section uses the video ministry of the diocese of Tirunelveli as an example of a successful attempt to participate in the people's process indirectly. Two of the videocassettes are studied as examples in order to show that a change is needed in terms of policies and strategies of Christian communication among the church related media institutions in India. By studying such attempts using two video films as examples, the need for extending this practice to other forms of ministry and mission in the diocese and in the churches elsewhere in India will be noted.

In the third section some models and policies of the practice of Christian communication in South India will be analysed. It will be argued that such interaction should not be limited to a Christian audience but could be extended to

non-Christians who form a majority of the Indian population. It is essential to develop a few models of interactive communication that would be applicable to the Indian churches, their media institutions and to the theological training for Christian communicators.

2. Interacting With the Audience: Principles and Practice

The task of the Christian communicator in the context of India is to share the gospel with the audience regardless of their religion, caste and race both inside and outside the church. Sharing the gospel cannot take place in a vacuum but among people who already hold certain religious beliefs and share certain expressions of such beliefs. In this study attention is focused on the interaction between Christian communicators and their Christian and non-Christian audience. Although Indian Christians are influenced by local cultural and social beliefs, they have preserved their denominational doctrines. Even after attempts at ecumenism, the exclusive attitude of the churches has largely contributed to the divisions between church denominations, castes and religions. In order to interact with the audience, Christian communicators need to address these issues theologically and practically.

If the Christian communicators are to interact with their audience, these three principles have to be translated into media practice. The principles arise out of a theology of interactive communication in which Jesus is seen as active participant in human communication. In this understanding Christian communication is seen as an ongoing process in which both the communicator and the audience participate. As Jesus participated in his hearers' process of communication through the parables,

Christian communicators are called to share their audiences' beliefs, participate in their hermeneutic process and interact with their worldview.

Christian communicators participate in the audience's search for the meanings of their beliefs in a changing context. While participating in the communication process along with the audience, they should be open to learning from new experiences. By sharing the audience's forms of communication and by reflecting and addressing their social and cultural issues, Christian communicators can interact with them. Three steps are needed to interact with the audience: to communicate indirectly, to participate in their hermeneutic process, and to challenge their worldview. The relevance of interactive communication and the principles involved will be analysed by studying these three steps before verifying them with the help of video programmes.

A. Communicating Indirectly

In chapters three and four it is pointed out that Jesus' use of the parables is clear evidence of indirect communication. He shared and used the expressions of his hearers' beliefs even though he was aware of their multiple meanings and interpretations. He interacted in such a way that his hearers could read themselves in the message. In a similar way Christian communicators are called to communicate the gospel indirectly. Christian communicators have to use the available expressions¹²⁹, genre and means¹³⁰ in order to interpret the audience's beliefs. Because these expressions and means provide multiple meanings to the audience, it is not possible to communicate the gospel in an absolute way. While engaging in the

audience's communication process, it is essential to realise their limitations in communicating belief in God.

Beliefs and experiences may be expressed in variety of ways which are not necessarily in conflict. For Dunn [1977: 226-7] such ideas can be traced in the New Testament itself. Macquarrie [1991:177] points out that several ways of understanding the person of Christ coexist in the New Testament. The gospel writers recorded the same events using different styles and language and for different purposes according to the language and ability of their audience. To make a claim for objective Christian communication could distract from the basic thrust of the gospel itself. By sharing the audience's beliefs, and by sharing their methods and means of communication, can Christian communicators interact with their respective audience. This leads to the need for communicating the gospel indirectly.

Christian communicators share their experiences of God in the light of the gospel but to enable the audience to read themselves in them and to establish relationship with God. It is God who directly confirms his communication to the individual as true. Tinsley [1980:169] argues in a similar manner that revelation is provisional and the God who reveals is greater than what is revealed. For him, signs, ambiguities, parables and ironies indicate this revelation. It is not that God's revelation is incomplete, but that the human understanding and communication of this revelation is limited. It is God who reveals himself in the process of interaction with people, while Christian communicators highlight the need for such interaction through their participation in the human communication process.

In order to interact with the audience, Christian communicators have to recognise three essential characteristics of indirect communication. The first

characteristic is to recognise the modern forms of communication as signs of the times and as signs of contradiction¹³¹. People share the media such as television for their communication, which has various kinds of programmes such as entertainment (soap opera), and information (news, documentaries). Communicating the gospel can neither be merely information nor simply be entertainment. The entertainment media have established a culture of communication in which various genres and characters are introduced everyday. They use and shape the available forms that are shared by audiences. To engage with audiences in their communication process the churches may have to use such forms in their communication.

The second characteristic is the need to begin from the standpoint of the audience by sharing their beliefs and using their expressions of belief. This leads Christian communicators to recognise the fact that there are many possible ways of communicating the gospel. One of them is to begin from what the audience share of their beliefs. In the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan, it was noted that Jesus began from the question that was asked by the lawyer¹³². The primary role of the Christian communicator is to establish a relationship between the audience (as individuals and as communities) and God through his/her participation in the process of communication. The communicator remains hidden in his/her involvement and enables the audience to interpret their beliefs in order to establish their relationship with God. This is indirect because audiences see their beliefs are interpreted and establish their own relationship with God.

The third characteristic is that Christian communication is not primarily information about doctrines or about the churches' activities or about Christian faith. It is the process of sharing the experience of God's involvement in people's lives and

interpreting the gospel through all forms of communication [Selvanayagam 1993: 242]. In this case Christian communicators do not possess the gospel but rather try to experience it by sharing with others. Selvanayagam [1993:240] notes that God's revelation through Jesus Christ is not our exclusive possession. He also points out that

the church is supposed to witness to Christ through word and action. We are possessed by God's love which cannot be fully possessed by us. It is the ongoing search on the part of the church into the depths of God's love in Christ leading to a continual transformation in life, tradition, worship and ministry.

Having experienced the relationship with God through the gospel, the Christian communicator becomes witness to it. To witness to the gospel does not mean to inform people about the church's good works but to communicate indirectly so that the audience can establish a relationship with God directly. Because the gospel is neither information nor possession, it can be communicated by becoming part of the gospel story. Churches and Christian communicators can share their experience and understanding of God's participation in people's lives as it is expressed in the New Testament and as it happens in the life of members of the church. In order to interact with the audience indirectly, Christian communicators have to participate in the process of communication that their audiences share.

B. Participating With the Audience

Jesus used the parabolic form of communication because it was shared by his audience and was available to him. Christian communicators have to begin from the

audience that is to share and to use their hermeneutic and communicative forms¹³³. By sharing and by interacting with the audience's communicative forms can Christian communicators participate in their communication process¹³⁴. These forms include certain means, genres and aesthetic elements that the audience already shares and uses among themselves in order to interpret their beliefs.

The contemporary communicative forms include a variety of means such as audio and visual aids, techniques such as animation and virtual images, genres such as films, series and documentaries; and aesthetic elements such as excitement and suspense. Christian communicators need to participate in this process despite its limitations in order to interact with the audience. Cray [1997:14-15] argues that cultural art forms and media set a limit on what can be seen and heard within them through their underlying worldview and interpret religious beliefs. Even though films, for example, do not communicate the gospel directly, Christian communicators have to make use of such means of communication.

i. Sharing the Media

In the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan, it has been pointed out that Jesus employed three main elements of communication in order to interact with his hearers. He used the parable as an oral medium of communication¹³⁵ that his hearers would understand. It has been shown that the parabolic form of interpretation, using metaphors and comparisons, was not unfamiliar to Jesus' audience even though the exact story genre was not available in other contemporary Jewish texts. This demonstrates the fact that Jesus' audience was already engaged in the process of

searching for meanings for their beliefs and for their life through the parabolic form of communication.

By using the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus attempted to interpret certain expressions of Jewish belief (such as eternal life, the law and neighbour). He interacted with the lawyer by encouraging him to interpret the word 'neighbour' from the context of the parable. The parable of the Good Samaritan helped Jesus not only to interpret these expressions but also to interact with his hearers' worldview. It also mediated certain social and cultural meanings between Jesus and his hearers.

Following Jesus' example of communication, Christian communicators are called upon to use all communicative means available to them in order to interact with the audience. The instrumental approach places the medium (such as television, radio and computer) between the Christian communicator and his/her audience. Without the engagement of the audience through the mass media, it would be difficult for any communicator to share and participate in their process of communication. For example, unless a large number of people in a society have an access to a television set, or a medium to receive the message, it is difficult for a communicator to interact with them through a television station. So, in the interactive approach, the communicator and the audience are seen as active participants in the ongoing process of communication because they share the same medium. As the audience start using television and computers, so the churches may have to invest in this new technology and train media personnel in order to participate in their process of communication. It is vital for the churches to give importance to the interactive approach rather than employing more media personnel.

The Christian communicator needs to be aware that the medium not merely communicates belief but interprets it. While interacting with people's beliefs, it is important to note that the medium shapes the message [McLuhan 1994:7]. The change in technology extends people's way of interacting among themselves. By using an analogue of light, McLuhan [1994:9] argues that the medium that shapes and controls the scale and forms of human association and action. He proposes that religious communication (education) would have to learn to be multilingual in order to interact with the audience. The media can only interpret the message. Communication of the gospel story through a medium could be seen as its interpretation and extension.

The media offers so many frameworks of interpretation that it is difficult to find a common language within which the audiences can communicate with each other. Each medium has its own way of interpreting the message. Mass media such as radio and television have transformed a street drama into a national, even into an international event with a wider audience. In many cases they have brought together local forms such as folk drama, music and dances and modern forms such as pop music and films. In order to interact with people's beliefs, Christian communicators can use stories and narratives. For example, in the Indian context, the Puranas [i.e., myths such as Ramayana and Mahabharat] are used for moral education. When they were transmitted on Indian television as a soap opera, the intention was to provide a Hindutva ideology [Mitra 1993:151]. Such ideology has caused tension among different religious communities, particularly among Hindus and Muslims in India.

In the context of India, it is essential for Christian communicators to interact by the use of a similar form of story-telling so that people (Hindus, Muslims and

Christians) would be motivated to live together peacefully. Similar forms and genres could be used in Christian communication in order to bring about reconciliation among these communities. This is an indirect method of communication because Christian communicators' participation in this reconciling process expresses God's love and presence, not merely their proclamation of the gospel. This is a process in which media technology contributes to the change in the way of interpreting beliefs and in so doing, addresses the needs created by the new social and cultural context. It not only extends the message but also introduces a new way to share and interpret religious beliefs.

Christian communicators need to become aware of the language that is being introduced by the media technology in order to understand its interpreting methods. This was recognised by the authors of *Lumen Vitae* in 1978 as 'New Language'. Metzinger [1978] introduces the issue of religious education in terms of a new language, that is, the language of audiovisual culture. By being attentive to the signs of the times, the church has to recognise the reality and the vastness of this transformation. Metzinger [1978:147] points out the need to rethink the evangelisation methods of the churches in order to adapt them to the requirements of modern society. He points out that teenagers are growing up in a world of sound and images. They are the first audiovisual generation, in that the new language is for them a continuous experience since early youth. Metzinger [1978] correctly says that young people would not listen to anyone who does not speak this new language. In the present study the main interest is not merely to transmit the gospel message but to interact with the audience by translating the gospel in terms of this new language. It is essential for Christian communicators to recognise and participate in such a

process even though such language may limit the meanings of the gospel. By recognising the new language, and new media technology, Christian communicators may have to find new hermeneutic methods in order to engage in this ongoing process together with the audience.

Ferreras-Oleffes [1978:233] encourages Christian communicators to accept audiovisual media as a way of reaching people because audiovisuals were reflections of contemporary society. For Ferreras-Oleffes [1978:234] audiovisuals are a new language which, like every language, need to be learnt through practice and critical reflection. This shows an urgent need for the churches not only to invest in these media institutions and to train the communicators but also to identify this new language and media of audiences in order that they might share and participate in their communication process.

By recognising the means that people in a particular community share among themselves, Christian communicators would find the opportunity to share the gospel and interact with them. Just as Jesus participated in his hearers' search for meanings through a parable, the churches and their communicators are called to share and participate in audiences' religious communication process by sharing their media. This is not only true for the technical side of the media but also true for the communicative forms. Unless the media used the forms, genre and aesthetic elements of the audience with whom it shares its message and medium, people would soon lose interest.

ii. Genres and Forms

In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus employed the forms and genre that were known to his hearers. The familiarity of the form and genre brought the audience into an immediate recognition of the meanings that the parable was about to convey. Jesus shared such forms and genre with his hearers to capture and maintain their attention. In a similar manner, Christian communicators should share the forms and genres used in various media that are known to the modern audience.

The new audiovisual language converts old cultural images, forms, genres and characters into new popular forms. For example Puranas such as Ramayana and Mahabharat are a common genre of story telling in Indian society. In the Mahabharat television series, the fight between good and evil is depicted in a story form [Mitra 1993:94]. In the story Krishna (an Avatar of God), helped the victory of good people who practice dharma¹³⁶. These Puranas were used to interpret people's beliefs in terms of their context [Mitra 1993:93]. When film and television put them into the form of visual characters, the new portrayal became popular among Indian audiences. The reason is that they were familiar with their ancient cultural forms and the use of television as their media. If people share an interest in genres such as soap operas and films, the Christian communicator also needs to employ such genres.

Certain cultural forms are very effective not only in capturing and maintaining the attention of the audience but also in providing a chance for Christian communicators to participate and interact with their beliefs. There are examples where communicators have brought about changes in social and religious processes through the entertainment media by using familiar forms of communication. In India people have used the entertainment media to bring awareness about socio-political

and cultural issues that were endangering their social processes. Kulothungan [1983:122] argues that it was the grassroot media with a popular genre which in Tamil Nadu brought an awareness of the injustice in their society and challenged the inequalities. Muthuswami [1983:131] developed this point by highlighting the role of 'Therukooththu' (street drama) in the process bringing development and awareness among Dalits in India.

Some of the cultural and folk forms have a natural propensity for participation and action. If their genre and form were converted into new audiovisual language, Christian communicators could widen their interaction. Appavoo Theophilus [1986:55-76] argues that folk forms of communication in South India were used to persuade people to protest against the caste system, the Islamic invasion and against colonisation even before the technology arrived. These forms are basically participatory in nature¹³⁷ and could be used in Christian communication to capture the attention of the audience.

As new forms and languages are developed with the new technologies, the old communicative forms are transferred into new programmes. These programmes might enable people to see continuity in their participation and introduce new ways of participating in their communication process. Christian communicators have to identify such forms of communication and use them in their medium in order to participate in the ongoing process of communication with the audience.

iii. Aesthetic Elements

It was noted in the previous chapters that Jesus used aesthetic elements in his parables. By inviting the hearers to enter into the story, to feel and to play the roles, Jesus enabled them to become aware of the meanings. By describing the condition of the traveller after the attack from robbers as a half-dead man Jesus raised sympathy among his hearers. By identifying the third passer-by as a Samaritan he astounded his audience. These are some examples of the aesthetic elements in the parable of the Good Samaritan. By using them Jesus could not only capture his hearers' attention but he also enabled them to read the wider meanings of the word 'neighbour'. Such a display of aesthetic elements was not unknown to Jesus' audience as was shown in the previous chapters. It is vital for the Christian communicator to recognise the role of aesthetic elements in interpreting the religious beliefs of their audiences.

Without attracting the attention of the audience, there is no possibility of interaction. Jesus used the aesthetic elements in the parable because he wanted his hearers to participate in the construction of meanings. He had to begin from the place where his hearers were. Kierkegaard argues that as the audience (learner) was in an aesthetic age, it was essential for the communicator (teacher) to begin from this point even though the aesthetic is incapable of expressing religious truth [Pattison 1992:72]. Christian communicators have to identify the tastes and interests of the audience and use the aesthetic elements and popular forms in order to interact with them. They cannot use all available aesthetic elements, but those which can interpret the gospel without offending any section of the audience.

As technological developments extend people's tastes and interests, communicative forms must change accordingly. Christian communicators need to be

sensitive and shift their use of means, and thus their method of interaction, according to the need created. Some modern theologians have emphasised the use of aesthetic elements in Christian communication. Balthasar [1982] points out that the reality of Christianity should be constructed from starting points in human culture: the beautiful (aesthetics), the good (dramatics) and the true. In his fourth volume on theological aesthetics, Balthasar defines *aisthesis* as a beholding of the glory that reveals itself [1991:9]. It is an act of beholding the living God that presupposes a transporting of the creature beyond itself and its natural cognitive faculties.

In his third volume, *The glory of the Lord: a theological aesthetics*, he points out that Biblical revelation took root in the concrete historical terrain of human thought, feelings and imagination, always using all these forms for its own expression [Balthasar 1986]. Thus all myths, philosophies and poetic expressions are innately capable of housing within themselves an intimation of divine glory [Balthasar 1991:11]. Theologically and practically there is a need for the use of the aesthetic elements in Christian communication. By using technology, communicative forms and aesthetic elements Christian communicators not only attract the attention of the audience but also enable them to participate in the ongoing process with reinterpreted beliefs and a challenged worldview. Hunt [1993:17] argues that one way of interacting with the audience is by reclaiming the poetic, and so a new narrative/symbolic form of communication should be introduced. Christian communicators should take note of this new emphasis on the poetic and aesthetic aspect of their work.

These aesthetic aspects of communication include the visual images, characters, popular narratives, folk genres, emotional plots, suspense and thrills and

other elements that enable the audience to participate in the imaginary world created by the communicator. Babin [1991:182-84] argues that narrative/symbolic communication should have priority in audiovisual or electronic media because it represents the best way of arousing people's interiority. He notes that the language of emotion and symbols is the language of the highest form of communication used by sages and mystics [Babin 1991:8]. While taking aesthetic elements into consideration, the primary purpose of interacting with the audience in order to share the gospel must not be lost. Just as Jesus used the aesthetic elements that were available to him, Christian communicators need to use them in their involvement in the audience's communication process. In an Indian context a wide range of aesthetic elements are available to Christian communicators. Modern media provide the best examples of blending many cultural forms and aesthetic elements together. For example, music, folk forms, dances and narratives are brought together in many video programmes [Traber 1983:1-3]. Many Indian films include songs, dance, humour and narratives in order to entertain the mass audiences.

These three aspects of communication – means, genre and aesthetic element - enabled Jesus to share, participate in and interact with his hearers. These principles are important for Christian communicators in their interaction with the modern audience. It is essential that the churches involve themselves in the communication processes of the people in and outside their fold. While using these aspects of communication, interacting with other social processes in which communicators and audiences live becomes a matter of course. While interacting with the audience, Christian communicators need to present Christian meanings of life among the multiple meanings that are available to the audience. The following section will point

out the way in which Christian communicators can interact with their audience's worldview.

C. Challenging the Worldview

Communication is part of an ongoing process in which people are involved in sharing their beliefs and worldview. As this communication process occurs in a particular cultural and historical context, it influences and is influenced by other social and cultural processes¹³⁸. As the social and cultural context of a community changes, new issues and new problems arise. In the Indian context, the village community lives with the practice of caste. The urban community is a mixed community in which various castes, religions, linguistic groups and tribes live together. This new social set-up raises problems in family and in community relationships, which is particularly true in the South Indian context. Social issues raise concerns that prompt people to search for new meanings for their religious beliefs. Religious communicators can help the audience in their search for meanings by reinterpreting their beliefs and worldviews. Christian communicators need to be involved in the process of communication in order to offer their meanings of the gospel. While interpreting the gospel they need to challenge the audience's worldview which arises out of such changes.

Jesus' use of the parable of the Good Samaritan shows that he shares a concern with the lawyer for the need to interpret the meanings of the word 'neighbour' within a changing context where many non-Jewish people lived in Judea. The parable of the Good Samaritan reflects on and addresses some of the emerging issues implicitly due to changes occurring in society. He interacts with the lawyer's

worldview by pointing out that even a Samaritan could be a better neighbour than a priest or a Levite. He provides his own meaning of the word 'neighbour' without condemning other meanings. He used the parable of the Good Samaritan to order to interact with the lawyer and enable him to develop its meanings. The meaning that Jesus and the lawyer shared through the parable of the Good Samaritan was relevant to their context which was undergoing changes during their time.

In a world where changes are occurring, there is a need for Christian communicators to challenge or to interpret the worldview of their audience from a Christian perspective. In order to interact with the audience's worldview, Christian communication needs to reflect and address the social and cultural issues of the time. While reflecting and addressing these issues, Christian communicators cannot avoid interacting with their audience's worldview. It is essential for them to participate in people's existence as Tillich [1959:204-5] argues. He defines communication as a matter of participation in people's existence. He suggested three ways of interacting with people: by sharing their concern, by pointing out the differences, and by using their ideas to awaken those among the communicators who are living in an ivory tower [Tillich 1959:207]. Christian communicators cannot provide answers to all the social and cultural problems but they need to present the gospel and its principles so that the audience might read themselves in it and solve those problems through their participation.

i. Principles not Rules

Christian communicators do not have easy solutions to all the problems of people's lives. While interacting with the audience, they do not propose rules of life

or a means of self-regulation but encourage them to have a relationship with God and live virtuously. Dumas [1968:433] says:

To be a Christian is to identify ourselves with the real questions of our time as Jesus did. He did not attempt to offer an ideal programme but sought to rebuild the human tissue between those whom the pressures and structures of the time had divided into opposite camps and who were fiercely convinced of their own righteousness.

Jesus himself did not offer an ideal situation in which everyone would be strictly following some rules and in which all the problems are solved¹³⁹. Rules and norms alone cannot solve all the social and cultural problems. The effect-centred approach portrays the mass media as powerful in affecting people's behaviour. Those who support this approach are trying to relate the role of the media to some social problems. By proposing a code of practice for media practitioners, an attempt is made to address the problems in the media practice. But codes and regulations alone cannot solve the issues in the media practice or the social problems.

Christian communicators have to provide their meanings through their participation in the people's communication process so that they choose and realise such potentialities in themselves. While acknowledging the fact that the media can have powerful impact on people's lives, one cannot simply blame and the media alone for this. Audiences do not necessarily all respond in the same way or as the producer would like them to read the content. The role of the audience in the construction of meanings has to be recognised. Because Christian communicators have not taken enough initiatives to present their meanings (among other meanings) effectively in the media, people do not have a chance to choose alternative meanings.

If the churches had invested and trained personnel with Christian principles, they might have provided these alternative meanings. Unless Christian

communicators interact with the people's communication processes by using modern means and forms, they cannot simply blame the media for their impact. Christian communicators need to present the gospel and its principles in such a way that the audience realises the need for living with higher values. It is the audience's relationship with God that can make them both realise their potential to live a life of higher values and to remain true to God and their fellow human beings.

ii. Reflecting the Social Context

The parable of the Good Samaritan reflects on issues such as robbery, the status of a priest and of a Levite and the relationship between Samaritans and Jews. When Jesus placed the event on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, he could bring his hearers into the context of the story immediately by making them imagine the situation. While using the media and its forms, Christian communicators need to consider how the content of their communication can be developed within the framework of their audience's context.

One way of interacting with the audience is to use the genre of film, or of a television series. While using such imaginative narratives, Christian communicators have to consider the context of the audience as a framework of their stories. They use characters, places and familiar settings in their production so that the audience feels at home with the story or film. If a series is produced for particular groups of people in the Southern part of India, then it is vital to reflect their own cultural and social realities within their surroundings. Reflecting the context of the audience is another way of encouraging the audience to participate.

By setting the context as a framework of participation in their communication process, Christian communicators could challenge the worldview of their audience by introducing some of their social issues into a Christian programme. The content needs to reflect not only the setting but also social and cultural issues even though they are not directly addressed [e.g. the robbers' attack on the traveller in the parable of the Good Samaritan]. Christian communicators highlight the presence of such issues in the social context and bring the story closer to the audience through a familiar setting. Christian media and their forms have to reflect the contemporary social and cultural contexts in order to interact with the worldview of the audience.

iii. Addressing the Social Issues

The Christian communicator can challenge the audience's worldview by addressing some of the social and cultural issues in their context. Jesus addressed one of the social issues related to the word 'neighbour' through the parable of the Good Samaritan. His interaction with the lawyer through the parable did not assume any absolute solutions to eradicate social evils but attempted to present a strong principle in the mind of the Lawyer. Jesus' aim was not to persuade the lawyer to eliminate thieves along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. The actions of a priest and of a Levite were compared with that of the Samaritan. Jesus did not pass any judgement on their actions. In a changing context where many non-Jewish people lived in Palestine and many Jewish people had to live outside Judea, the religious meaning of the word 'neighbour' needed reinterpretation. In order to widen the lawyer's understanding with a broader meaning of the word 'neighbour', Jesus had to introduce a Samaritan as the hero of the story.

When there is a change in the social context (urbanisation, industrialisation) more problems arise and more social and cultural meanings evolve. Some times changes in the communication processes might bring about changes in people's social context and thus in their worldview¹⁴⁰. McLuhan [1994:7] highlights the ways in which the machine altered people's relations to one another. Metzinger rightly points out that the new communication media introduced changes in the social context. He states:

A new civilisation has come into being; a new culture is springing up before us. People are rapidly passing from an elite civilisation to a mass civilisation in which the communication media are transforming our planet into a large village, and at the same time, giving priority to the image over the word [Metzinger 1978:145].

The changes in one aspect of the social process influence all the other processes. It is vital for Christian communicators to recognise and interact with the audience according to the changes and help them to reinterpret their worldview accordingly. At times these changes are complex; Christian communicators have to provide their meanings amidst other meanings in an attractive way so that the audience might pay attention. By sharing and participating in the audience's struggle for meanings in life can Christian communicators interact with the audience's belief and worldview.

In terms of media practice, it is vital to address these issues very carefully and indirectly, as they can be both sensitive and complex. For example caste clashes are a common phenomenon in South India. Having been influenced by this evil, the Tirunelveli diocese struggles to be free of it but cannot address it directly. It is essential for the church to interact within itself by challenging the worldview that supports this caste practice. There is also the practice of female infanticide among

certain Hindu tribes in Usilampatti [The Hindu 1998:1]. In such a context the church has to produce a programme in association with non-governmental organisations in order to raise awareness among the public and particularly among this community through films, documentaries, dances and drama. By addressing and reflecting the context of the audience, Christian communicators could present the meanings of the gospel and its values in an interactive way. They recognise the presence of multiple meanings among the audience. Without making claims of objective or absolute solutions, they participate in the communication process in which people share their Christian principles. As Jesus interacted with his hearers' worldviews by challenging and reinterpreting their beliefs, Christian communicators are to interact with their audience in an implicit manner.

By reflecting and addressing their social and cultural issues, the content of Christian communication enables the audience to read themselves and to allow themselves to be read by the content of the gospel. By enabling individuals to establish direct relationship with God through participation, Christian communicators help individuals to realise their potential to hold higher values as a response to God's love and care. Christian communicators interact with the audience in the hope that their audience will realise the potential in themselves and see their actions in the light of God's love for them.

With these principles and their practical applications in mind, the next section will focus on the involvement of the diocese of Tirunelveli in the communication process of people in and around Tirunelveli. Using examples from the video ministry of the diocese, it will be demonstrated that the video programmes could be more effective and interactive than before if these principles were applied. The following

section will consider two video films for specific analysis and will study them within the context of the ongoing process in Tirunelveli.

3. The Indian Churches' Participation in People's Process

The previous section considered the practical application of the three principles of Christian communication which were developed from the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this section the relevance of these principles will be analysed with reference to the video ministry in the diocese of Tirunelveli. The selection, production and distribution of the Christian video programmes will be studied within the context of the wider process of communication in South India. While identifying and appreciating diocesan participation through the videocassette ministry, this study will also highlight the need for widening and improving such involvement. Within the limited scope of this research, two videocassettes are selected as examples.

The involvement of the diocese of Tirunelveli in the videocassette ministry is analysed within the context of the communication process which is shared by the people in South India. Before analysing this involvement, attention will be given to certain characteristics of the communication practices and methods in South India. While analysing the churches' participation within the communication process in South India the need for using these practical policies and strategies will become apparent. In a further section various models of Christian communication will be developed appropriate to Indian churches and Indian seminaries.

A. The Use of the media by the People in India

In India people share different forms of the communication process because of differences in the cultural and social contexts. Historically the contexts were shaped by external events such as the Muslim invasion and the rule of the British East India Company [Chapman 1997:5]. The first factor that influenced the way in which people engage in their communication process was the introduction of media technology. Sound recording was introduced in 1927 with a proliferation of private radio clubs¹⁴¹. The first Indian talkie film produced by the Imperial Film Company was released on 14 March 1931¹⁴². Before the arrival of television, theatres were the main centres for entertainment and social gatherings. Experiments with a 500-watt television transmitter began in India as early as 1959 [Mitra 1993:12]. Since 1990s the television began to become a popular medium even though radio is the major medium for the masses in India.

Appavoo Theophilus points out that before modern media were introduced, villagers used to gather in the village centres to participate in folklore forms of communication [1986:102]. After cinema theatres were introduced, they became the centres of social gathering even though local forms of communication continued to dominate village life. These performances were replaced by radio and television sets in the centre until a number of households unable to own a set. The practice of renting a videocassette to view it together began to bring them back to village. The introduction of modern media has certainly changed the means and forms through which people share communication¹⁴³.

The second factor that influenced this process in India was the relationship between the government and the media industries. Even though newspapers enjoy the

freedom to inform people, the Government of India owns both radio (All India Radio) and television (Doordharshan) broadcasting stations¹⁴⁴. When these media were introduced, they were used for educational purposes, but later in the 1970s, entertainment programmes were introduced [Mitra 1993]. The Indian government liberalised economic policy in July 1991 which increased the number of middle class families and thus in the use of television and radio in their homes¹⁴⁵. The number of television sets in use in Tamil Nadu was nearly four million in 1994. Tamil Nadu, out of a total population of 60 million. The number of television sets in India is 3,734,000 [Chapman 1997:57]. In 1990, the Government of India introduced a policy to grant autonomy to its media institutions (such as Doordharshan and AIR radio)¹⁴⁶. Even though this has not yet fully materialised, the quality of the programmes in these institutions has improved [Eapen 1997:19-21].

The Indian government could not control the channels introduced by satellite and cable networks. The government introduced 23 regional satellite channels in order to compete with other international channels. In urban and semi-urban areas these channels are received at one or two points and are distributed from there through a cable network. In 1999 the government of India has agreed that private FM radio stations may be set up in India for the first time [*Indian Express* web 1999:1]. Such activities show that the government of India is willing to democratise the institutions of communication so that people can engage and participate in this process.

The third factor that enhanced this process is the cultural revolution, particularly in Southern India. Dravidian movements introduced a new form of communication, street drama, in order to enable people to become aware of the exploitation in the name of religion and caste. Eventually the writers and artists of street drama became

the writers and artists of films [Joshva 1989]. They championed the ideas of liberation, equality and freedom. One of these writers was re-elected chief minister of the state in 1996 and two of the artists were former chief ministers of Tamil Nadu. Films became means for them to have an influence on the masses. The localised village participation was turned into mass participation through films and television programmes. But as the number of television sets increased in villages and in urban areas, the media separated people into families and individuals.

These three factors have certainly contributed to the communication process in South India. Other minor factors have also influenced this process, such as international radio and television networks from Sri Lanka and the rise of religious fundamentalism. It is important to understand Christian communication as part of this ongoing process. Before analysing the participation of the diocese of Tirunelveli within the context of this process, it is necessary to highlight the way in which the churches¹⁴⁷ in India have responded to these changes in communication.

B. The Indian Churches' Participation in Communication

The churches in India participate in the communication process by sharing different types of means and methods of communication. For example, through their educational institutions, social service organisations, missionaries, priests and media institutions, they communicate the gospel to others. Their methods involve preaching, conducting services, printing, singing and performances even though preaching and worship services are the dominant forms. The churches are involved as institutions; for example, the Church of South India Synod occasionally participates in broadcasting the message through the regional radio or television. The local

dioceses engage in all forms of communication through their missionaries, presbyters and local voluntary workers. Each church has its own way of communicating the gospel - some through loud speakers on top of the church building. In addition the churches are involved in-group and interpersonal communication. In this section I focus mainly on the video ministry. This is a form of communication in which all the village people gather to view a video programme produced by the church.

By analysing one form of Christian communication by the churches in India in the light of the principles developed in the previous chapters, it will be argued that they are relevant to other forms and methods too. As the video ministry of the diocese of Tirunelveli will be used as an example, a short historical background of the use of audiovisuals and media by the churches in India will be given in this section. This serves to illustrate the attitude of the churches in India towards such media and the need for a change in the churches' theological basis of communication. There are different stages through which the Indian churches' participation in the communication process has passed. Even though various stages are in different historical periods, they cannot be sharply distinguished. The videocassette ministry of the diocese of Tirunelveli is studied in continuity with these four stages of the process of Christian communication.

i. Missionaries' use of the Media

The attitude of the missionaries in India towards the use of audiovisual media was a mixed one. Ebright [1955:134] points out that between 1918 and 1928 missionaries introduced audiovisual aids to their senior colleagues who, however, questioned the 'high-fault in' vocabulary and 'dangerous innovation' of the magic

lantern and picture-roll. Many of them did not want to use such media in their mission work and did not want to adapt it to local methods of communication. The missionary churches¹⁴⁸ had a negative attitude not only towards the modern media but also towards local culture [Moses 1954:4]. Even though they used periodicals and magazines as their means of informing both Christians and non-Christians about their work, there was less interest in using audiovisual materials among missionaries and church workers. One of the Indian theologians, C.R.W. David, notes [1980] that the majority of churchmen and church leaders considered the movies as occasions for temptation to sin. The negative attitude created by some missionaries and some churches might have contributed to their disengagement in the communication processes of the South Indian people. They chose, instead, to use their own media and their own forms that were irrelevant, or not shared by the people.

The second approach of the missionaries was to view the media as a means to evangelise non-Christians. Before 1946 individual missionaries brought audiovisual aids to India which were used for their own denominational programmes. These aids were used primarily to inform people about the gospel. In this approach the purpose was to convert people to Christianity. Thangasamy [1948:209] points out that the churches communicated the gospel through education, economic and social services and by creating communities. Missionaries used different forms of media. Some used local forms such as the Ashram type of communication, indigenous dances and music [Thangasamy 1948:209]. Others used imported methods such as flannel-graphs, gramophone records and filmstrips in their mission work [Priestly 1949:173].

In 1946 the Foreign Missions Conference¹⁴⁹ (FMC) set up an audiovisual aids committee. This committee along with the National Council of Churches in India

approached RAVEMCCO (Radio, Visual Education, Mass Communication Committee of the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA) to develop radio and video programmes [Ebright 1955]. This committee brought changes to Christian communication in India on three levels. First they emphasised the need for the production, distribution and use of simple audiovisual aids. Secondly they introduced a training programme through conferences and workshops for missionaries, pastors and church workers. Thirdly they organised a full year (audiovisual training) course in co-operation with Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur. This committee established a centre, called the Christian Association for Radio and Audiovisual Services (CARAVAS) in Jabalpur. Since 1954, this centre has been involved in the production of radio and video programmes [Ebright 1970:135]. In their earlier work CARAVAS produced programmes with traditional forms using audiovisual means to help the work of missionaries [Wilson 1967:14].

There were efforts by some missionaries to use a particular medium and even to recognise the cultural aspects of communication. In 1949 a few individual missionaries and churches attempted to use drama in their evangelism [Lorbeer 1949:173]. They were accused of having sceptical views and were blamed for the assimilation of pagan culture by the churches [Moses 1954:4]. Mostly Western forms and means of communication were used such as flannel-graph and English films [Duerksen 1950:219]. There was no real effort to interact with people's beliefs and their worldview; rather a new belief and a new worldview was being imported from outside their culture. Many Christian converts in India adopted this new Christian belief and new worldview. It brought an explicitly exclusive worldview to the Indian

church and a negative attitude towards other religions, though at times other religious beliefs may have influenced the members of the churches.

ii. Churches' Use of the Media

The churches looked at the media from a conventional perspective in which preaching and conducting services were the main forms of communication; audiovisual media were used to enhance such participation. They were seen as extensions of the church's sermons and Sunday services. The Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) which developed the earliest Christian broadcasting in India adopted similar view¹⁵⁰. They broadcast sermons and services in order to encourage Christians and non-Christians to listen and to learn about the gospel. In 1968 FEBC radio conducted a study of the letters received from listeners¹⁵¹. They found that Christian broadcasting in India has made a definite impact on many people who listened to their programmes [Raju 1968:11]. By the 1950s, the Lutheran Churches in India had come up with their own centre (Christian Media Centre) in Madras. It still produces programmes for radio¹⁵².

Jeyaweera [1978:4] argues that even though there are 28 Christian groups broadcasting the gospel from Ceylon, the Seychelles and the Philippines, they have often failed to interact with the wider Indian audience. They lack understanding of the history, the culture and the consciousness of the various social groups. He is also critical of the forms of communication that are used by producers in the Christian media. The basic issue is the attitude towards other forms of communication whereby the churches and their media institutions do not consider adapting local forms to share the gospel.

Some of the non-denominational radio programmes use the conventional forms (e.g. FEBA and Radio Vishwavani). Vishwavani radio station is part of Trans-World Radio Ministries (TWR-Vishwavani)¹⁵³. TWR started a radio station in Sri Lanka in the 1970s. This station broadcasts Christian programmes in 18 Indian languages [Arles 1991:188]. Trans-World Radio Ministries work closely with the Tirunelveli diocese. One of their eight audio recording centres is in the diocesan office and is administered by one of the priests of the diocese. Their programmes mainly involve broadcasting sermons, songs and Sunday services. The diocese of Tirunelveli started making use of this recording centre of Vishwavani and with their help they produced some of their audiocassettes. The programme needs of such stations puts pressure on the churches to produce audio programmes in Tamil. The Vishwavani forms and styles influenced the diocesan method of Christian communication. The churches in India continued to use the media to communicate the gospel in the conventional forms of preaching and worship.

By the 1970s various non-denominational and evangelical organisations began to use a variety of media (such as video and audiocassettes) to propagate (preach) the gospel to Christians and non-Christians in India. There are, in addition, a number of charismatic and missionary movements which produce and distribute their own publicity materials. One of them - D.G.S. Dhinakaran [1999:5-6] - imitates the American tele-evangelists and runs charismatic programmes on the Satellite channels. Their forms of communication consist mainly of preaching, singing, conducting church services and providing teaching for Christians [Dhinakaran 1999:2-3]. The audiovisual media are seen as instruments of God to extend sermons and prayers to a wider audience.

After the Church of South India (CSI) union was formed in 1947, many steps were taken in mission and evangelism. One major step was to set up a department for Christian communication so that different cultural traditions could contribute to Christian media. Some of the churches were already well advanced in terms of media training and in using local cultural forms beside the conventional and missionary forms. For example the Ashram method of communicating the gospel were already in use in the dioceses of - Tirunelveli, Madhya Kerala, Krishna-Godavari and Jaffna dioceses [CSI reports 1966:5]. The Ashram is a place of meditation where gurus interpret and teach people their beliefs and spirituality. The Christian Ashram's life is very simple, bordering on austerity and everything being held on a community basis. Much importance is given to worship and meditation. The atmosphere is such that non-Christian visitor feels perfectly at home [Thangasamy 1948:209]. In 1949, the Diocese of Medak arranged an audiovisual conference using the regional language with the help of the Rev. Koteling who was in charge of NCC's Department of communication [Priestley 1949:173-4]¹⁵⁴. In the 1960s the attitude of the churches began to change due to the people's use of mass media. In 1966, CSI Synod Board of Missions and Evangelism' reported some development in bringing together audiovisual aids and indigenous drama and dance. Their report was based on the success of such programmes in the dioceses of Madras and Medak [CSI reports 1966:5].

After 1970 CARAVAS began to provide an opportunity for frequent encounters between theologians and editors, writers, producers, actors and directors who earn their living in secular communication. CARAVAS helped Indian Christians to produce films, audio and visual aids by providing training and equipment [Wilson

1967:14-15]. Having adopted new methods CARAVAS realised that it was essential to bring local forms and media together. CARAVAS worked with the CSI communication department to train Christian communicators with their equipment and recruited those professionals from CSI dioceses who were successful in using local cultural forms to train their students.

After seeing the success of these programmes, the CSI dioceses began to get involved in producing and distributing their own audio and video programmes. Church leaders began to emphasise a policy and strategy of Christian communication [Raju 1968:11], thus responding to the contemporary process of communication as they recognised that their old approach was not working [Peel 1961:4 & 1962]. In the 1980s the Church of South India introduced more sophisticated programmes and Communication centres in the dioceses [Premsagar 1987:3-4]. Through such programmes the CSI Synod came to see the value of relevant audiovisual aids and television programmes. The Synod set out to train local Christian communicators to assist co-ordination between dioceses, and to bring awareness of the role of the media in the church.

After 1986, the CSI dioceses and synod began to see a gap in the relationship between their practice and their theological basis. Their practice was to adopt the local cultural forms and means of communication while their theological attitude towards such forms remained negative. Some theologians began to address this problem [Francis 1983:3-5; Chandran 1986:3-8]. In most cases their understanding of communication was still in terms of information and stimulation, and it was therefore difficult for them to try to interact with the culture and media shared by the

people. The editor of South India Churchman, Babu, identified two dimensions of communication: transmission and stimulation [1989:1-2].

At about this time, theological institutes such as Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary and Gurukul Theological College began a department of Christian communication in order to provide training for the presbyters and theologians in this field. As the dioceses and Christian communicators see themselves theologically as senders and people see themselves as a passive audience, it is very difficult for those who initiate such interaction to succeed. Even though the equipment and methods are available, the basic problem is the churches' disengagement from conventional practice. The need for a new theological basis is thus evident whereby God, the churches and the people become have to be seen as participants in the communication process. Within this wider context of communication, the diocesan involvement in the video ministry will be studied with reference to two examples.

iii. Critical Appraisal of Traditional Communication

In the above section the attitudes of various missionaries and of the churches towards the media are noted. It was shown that some missionaries and churches tried to use the media that were open to them, but that others had neglected the opportunities that were available to them. Only a few missionaries and churches in India adopted local forms and cultural means of communication. Many of them were successful in their communication work. Selvaratnam [1953:39] argues that evangelisation through the Ashram (meditating place) was successful among the Hindus in India. The churches use conventional forms and methods of communication such as preaching in order to communicate the gospel both within

and outside their fold. Even when they use the media, they see them as an extension of their conventional forms.

Although the churches need to engage with an open mind both in the media and the forms that are familiar to the audience, there is also a need for a critical and balanced use of media in Christian communication. Firstly some of the traditional forms of communication in India are exploitative in nature¹⁵⁵. For example, Massey in his book *Down Trodden* says:

The two great epics the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha*, composed during the period between 600 BCE and 500 BCE., describe the further deterioration of the Dalits' condition (low castes). Indeed a story from the *Ramayana* tells how even *Sudras* (low castes) had become degraded [1997:14].

They are portrayed in this story as degraded people. These epics and their forms contain certain social and religious meanings that might degrade certain groups of people in India. Christian communicators need to be aware of such meanings and issues in their audiences' forms and these characters even though they are familiar to their audiences. Pradip Thomas [1995:150] argues that "traditional forms of communication needs to be seen as open texts that allow both continuity as well as change". He questions the 'internal values systems' that consciously cultivate exclusivist understanding of tradition of linking these to concepts of nationhood and identity. Even though he recognises the pragmatism in the traditional forms, he wants them to be used critically in the process of democratising communication [1995:150-1]. Due to the diversity of the audiences in India Christian communicator's participation in the audience's communication process should avoid degrading any member of the audiences. Some of these forms and their characters have to be used

carefully.

While discussing cinema Selvanayagam [1996:32-34] identifies certain social issues that are addressed by a film called *Parasakti* (the Supreme Power). This film not only challenges the religious system but also highlights the lack of depth in the system. The same traditional story forms were used to challenge the tradition that such forms once supported. The cinema directors and producers in India develop some of these new forms that challenge the negative elements of existing social system and practices. Christian communicators may use some of these forms and characters in their programmes and join with those who try to reinterpret or challenge the existing social evils. It is vital for Christian communicators to engage in the audience's communication process and also critically assess their participation time to time. In many cases the churches' attempt to communicate using local forms often lacked a critical understanding of the exploitative nature of forms of communication. This led to a Christian justification and reinforcement of existing evils such as the caste system in India.

Secondly the government owns the television and radio industries. Both are considered to be the mouthpiece of the ruling party or government. They often ignore social issues such as poverty and exploitation. Sainath [2000:9] argues that the media (press) in India ignores the issues which affect millions of the poor. If the churches cannot use the mainstream media to bring awareness among Indian audiences of poverty and oppression, then they need to use alternative media (such as cable television networks) in order to engage with the people. It is essential that Christian communicators find a way to address such social issues and produce films or television series that reflects the people's poverty. The churches have to bring

awareness among the media practitioners and among the audiences about the social issues such as poverty and exploitation. This might bring about a wider discussion about these issues and enable people to become aware of such issues. By being critical of the negative elements of communication practices, Christian communicators can identify themselves with their audiences and their context.

Thirdly there is a cultural invasion of global media industries in the Indian context. Even though they have not made a huge impact on mass audiences, this is a great challenge to the churches in India. The multinational media, particularly satellite channels, are growing in number and trying to influence the people with their own cultural meanings. By engaging in the audience's process of communication the churches in India can bring about awareness among the mass audience in India about these issues in communication. By working together with other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) the churches may try to bring this awareness only through indirect methods of communication using a variety of media.

These critical elements need to be recognised in this interactive perspective of communication in order to have a balanced approach towards the media. Christian communicators are called to present the meanings of the gospel among other meanings. They are also called to challenge some of the media practices that divide the communities while using the media. While encouraging Christian communicators to engage in the audience's communication process, this study argues that they should not simply use the available media and forms of communication uncritically. Even if they themselves become part of the exploitative system, they need to find a way to challenge such systems indirectly without unnecessarily offending the audiences. This critical use of the media and forms would facilitate Christian

communicators' ability to interact with their audiences.

C. Tirunelveli Diocese and Video Ministry

i. Critical Introduction to the Video Ministry

As part of the Church of South India, the diocese of Tirunelveli has been influenced by the developments in the understanding of communication. Tirunelveli diocese is one of the 21 dioceses in the Church of South India. It is 215 years old and has a wide variety of mission programmes. Through the programme of the Indian Missionary Society (an indigenous missionary society) support is given to 300 missionaries all over India to spread the gospel. They have nearly 450 schools (from elementary to high schools), seven colleges, a polytechnic college and other social institutions, such as old people's homes and homes for destitutes [Panchangam 1999:72-109].

Being the biggest diocese in South East Asia with three hundred thousand members, the diocese has a big responsibility towards its members and those outside its fold in terms of communication. The diocese and local congregations participate in a communication process using a number of forms and means. Through audio and videocassettes and through magazines the diocese can reach people both within and outside the churches. Besides the diocesan involvement, other independent organisations and media institutions also reflect and contribute to the Christian community in the Tirunelveli area.

Tirunelveli is an exception among dioceses in South India in its interaction with people of other faiths. The first CMS missionary to Tirunelveli, Rhenius¹⁵⁶, has studied Hinduism and interacted with Brahmins and high castes through his lectures

in a Hindu Temple in Tirunelveli [Cathedral Souvenir 1998:5]. Some indigenous missionaries attempted to change these approaches in a different way from that of the Western missionaries. A number of individuals such as Krishnapillai (poet), B.V.Sastriar (musician), Bishop Appasamy (theologian) and Bishop Azariah (missionary) set examples for the Christians in this diocese to interact with local cultural elements while communicating the gospel. Bishop Azariah of Dornakal (1874-1945), the first Indian Bishop and a missionary of IMS from Tirunelveli, built the first church in Dornakal in the form of a temple and a mosque [Packiamuthu 1974:3]. He also introduced Dravidian cultural traditions into the worship services.

Bagavathar Vedanayagam Sastriar (1774-1864) wrote and sung many Tamil lyrics in Carnatic Music which are used by the Indian churches. The local Indian kings in Tamil respected him for his Christian poems and the Tamil people called him 'Suvisesha Kavi Rayar' (The Evangelical Poet). Krishnapillai transcribed John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* into a Tamil poem which is still studied and read by all sections of society in India. He wrote many Tamil Christian poems which are read by students in Tamil Nadu [Richard 1974:5]. These examples show that the interaction between Christian communicators and the Indian people is not new. The diocese continued to set an example by developing certain aspects of interactive approach of certain missionaries and theologians. The CSI synod recommended the churches to encourage individuals and groups of people to use local forms of Christian communication such as Ashrams, Villupattu (telling stories through songs and jokes with musical instruments), Kollattam (dance) and drama [CSI report 1966:5].

The majority of the congregations of the diocese live in villages. Due to mass conversions in the area since 1800, most of the villages became Christian. Rhenius

(1820-1835) allowed low caste communities into the Christian fold and created a large community of Christians in Tirunelveli [Cathedral Souvenir 1998:4-5]. Among these villages, cultural interactions and communication events happened in the centre of the village. Different forms of Christian communication arose from these performances. The Dravidian movements exploited the village centres by enacting drama and showing films to achieve their goals. They brought a new culture of communication by which the centre of the village was given over to cinema theatres, particularly in Tamil Nadu [Peel 1961:4]. There was a need for the churches in the diocese to recognise such communication processes and participate by devising new methods of Christian communication. The diocese began to encourage the use of film projectors, lantern-slides, flannel-graphs and tape recorders in 1966 [CSI reports 1966:5]. These audiovisual aids used Western forms rather than locally produced programmes. Even though the diocese had an interest in using all possible means their purpose was to inform the masses about the churches' activities.

In 1985 with the help of the CSI communication department and with the assistance of TWR Vishwavani, Tirunelveli diocese started producing video films. These are the first of their kind in the CSI dioceses of Tamil Nadu, even though the national media in association with some other dioceses had produced Christmas or Easter programmes. The diocese's attempt to produce, distribute and broadcast these video programmes sets an example for other dioceses so that they might also bring local forms together to interpret the gospel. The diocese encouraged the presbyter in charge of Children's Mission to produce video programmes. Thus since 1990 a series of video programmes have been produced in order to interact with Christians and non-Christians in Tirunelveli with the message of the gospel. This is clear evidence

of the churches' willingness to participate in the communication process already shared by the people.

The video production of the Department of Children's Mission was a first step of the diocese towards an interactive approach to communication. By studying two of the diocesan video programmes, it becomes apparent that the principles developed in this research could be applied more widely to other methods of communication. If the diocese and the CSI Synod adopt this interactive approach, the churches in India can participate indirectly in the wider communication process of the people with the gospel message. It clearly points to a need for training presbyters and missionaries in understanding this theological basis and the interactive approach to Christian communication.

The synopsis of two video films will be given and analysed to show how it is possible to interact with the audience's belief, worldview and forms of communication. The first film *Thoonhal* (Pillars) is a story about the life of an imaginary mission worker whose name is Peter. It was produced by Tirunelveli Diocese Youth Mission (TDYM). The second film *Jumbulingam* is the real story of a brigand who was converted by a missionary. This film was produced by the Tirunelveli Diocese Children Mission (TDCM) with the help of mission workers and a few professional actors and actresses.

Both the presbyters in charge of children and youth mission were involved as directors of these two films. They hired the equipment and technicians. Madras diocese offered help by sending workers from their Department of Drama Development to produce these programmes. The TWR-Vishwavani recording centre did the sound recordings. Even though the quality of the programmes cannot be

commended, the effort and co-ordination with which the production was carried out can be seen as a genuine attempt to participate in the communication process that people share outside the church.

ii. Kierkegaard's 'Christendom' Revisited

The previous section described the way in which the Diocese of Tirunelveli attempts to engage with both its Christian and non-Christian audiences. It also noted that some of the missionaries used forms of communication that were familiar to the people in Tirunelveli and thus were able to interact effectively with their audiences. However, there is a difference in the way in which the diocese attempts to communicate the gospel and the approach adopted by these missionaries. This section will try to identify the problems behind the diocese's communication by comparing it with the idea of Christendom that Kierkegaard [1944] addresses in his book *Attack upon "Christendom"*. His attack was theological. Kierkegaard's criticism was aimed "at the churches' history, contemporary status and beyond at the social-political order in which the church was established – the synthesis of state and church, of Christianity and culture he repeatedly referred to as *Christendom*" [Plekon 1982:329]. In *Training in Christianity* he compares the triumphant church with an established Christendom [1941:207].

Even though some missionaries have attempted to use the cultural forms of communication familiar to the people in Tirunelveli, the churches have often displayed a negative attitude towards these forms of communication and also towards the media. My study argues that interaction between the churches and their audiences does not depend only on the media or on the professional qualifications of

communicators. Rather the churches have to engage with their audience in their search for religious and social meanings. Only through a process of continuous engagement and interaction can the churches witness to the gospel and present a clear choice for the audience. The primary problem is with the theological understanding of communication which leads to the necessity for an alternative hermeneutic approach. My study has identified an alternative approach that was developed from Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication.

This section points out that Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication is relevant to the context of the churches in India. Kierkegaard attacks 'Christendom' for changing the gospel into a means of direct communication. According to Kierkegaard [(1850)1991:134] the churches transmit the gospel merely as information about their doctrines. Having acquired power and influence through their educational and social institutions, the churches in India behave at times like 'Christendom'. They identify themselves as established churches (Church of South India, Church of North India and the Catholic Church of India). Through their established institutions, they often inform the audience about the gospel rather than interact with the audiences by engaging in their communication process. This is also true of certain churches in India, especially in the Diocese of Tirunelveli where the churches proclaim the gospel primarily through conventional forms such as preaching and worship services. This style of proclamation is less sensitive to the local cultural forms of communication [Jeyaweera 1978:3-4].

Most of the diocesan magazines carry information about the Bishop's visits and other detailed notices [e.g. Narpothagam 1999:3]. When the diocese presents programmes on Radio Vishvawani they contain mainly sermons and details about the

churches. This shows that the churches in South India, similar to Kierkegaard's Christendom model, too often treat Christian communication simply as information about the churches and their doctrines [Wilson 1983:12]. By using the conventional forms such as sermons and worship services, the churches often make claims for the historical validity of the gospel. It is true that the gospel has a historical background, but the primary purpose of communicating the gospel is to enable the audience to come closer to God.

The churches should not look for proofs to demonstrate their faith but rather should communicate the gospel indirectly. The churches need to communicate through films or documentary series that would enrich the audience's faith in God without making claims about their traditions and doctrines. In this sense this study agrees with Kierkegaard's argument that the gospel communication exists only for faith¹⁵⁷. In order to emphasise the importance of indirect communication, Kierkegaard points to Jesus' way of communication and thus challenges what he perceives as 'Christendom' on the basis of Jesus' methods.

Another similarity between the churches in India and 'Christendom' is that both play the role of 'senders' in Christian communication. Because the Indian churches treat the gospel message as mere information they assume that they possess it and send it as a package to the audience [Wilson 1983]. This is often true of the churches in India and particularly within the diocese of Tirunelveli. The diocese has not made enough effort to participate in the audience's (particularly non-Christian) process of communication in order to address their social, religious and cultural issues [Babu 1983:13-14]. Their radio programmes and even the video programmes are aimed at sending this message as a package. The diocese is mainly interested in

producing Christian programmes and thus excludes the wider audience to whom they are often shown.

Kierkegaard explains the role of a Christian communicator (teacher) by using the imagery of the 'midwife'¹⁵⁸. He calls for 'Christendom' to dissolve and to allow the audience to stand alone before God. The communicator remains anonymous in the process. The purpose of indirect communication is not to bring the learner into a relationship with the teacher but rather into relationship with God. Each individual of the audience has to stand on his own before God even though communication is a community event. My study points to the need for the Christian communicator to use the forms, beliefs and worldviews that the audiences share among them in order that each individual is brought before God. Christian communicators participate in the audience's process of communication which is a community event.

Even though Christian communication is a social process in which members of a community are involved, individuals have to stand alone before God as well as together as a community of believers. An Individual's relationship with God strengthens his or her relationship with the community and the community's relationship with him or her. In this sense the church needs to be more interested in bringing the audience closer to God rather than towards the doctrines even though they are also important. Such understanding of Christian communication is particularly relevant to the churches in the South Indian context [Duraisingh 1988]. For this Christian communicators (teachers) are called to begin from where the audiences are. Both are learners in the process of Christian communication, as both stand alone before God.

A final comparison between the churches in South India and Christendom at the time of Kierkegaard can be made on the basis of their disregard for the audience's communication process. Kierkegaard pointed out that if the learners are in the aesthetic age, then the teacher should begin from the aesthetic¹⁵⁹. That means the teacher (communicator) needs to engage in the process in which the learners (audiences) are engaged. Chapter 3 noted that this is true in Jesus' communication through the parables. If the churches disregard the process in which the audiences are engaged, then it is difficult for them to interact with their respective audiences. Both the Christendom of Kierkegaard's time and the churches in India often do not use the audience's forms of communication, do not share their beliefs and do not reflect the audience's context. As a result there is less possibility for a Christian communicator to interact with a wider audience.

These are a few similarities between the Christendom at the time of Kierkegaard and the churches in India. My study argues that Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication is relevant to the Indian context in order to challenge the Indian churches' principles of Christian communication. In some ways the churches in India are unlike the Christendom. Most of the churches in India are basically mission churches. Even though they have a few problems as identified in this section, they are generally growing churches which are trying to communicate the gospel in various ways. One of the primary differences between 'Christendom' and the churches in India is that the Christendom (at the time of Kierkegaard) was often linked to the state and political power whereas in India the churches are independent of the state and have no official political links. This section identifies the theological importance of Kierkegaard's concept of communication and its relevance to the

Indian context. With these principles and concepts in mind, two video films produced by the diocese of Tirunelveli will be studied in the next section.

D. Analysis of the Two Video Films

i. Synopsis of 'Thoonhal' (Pillars)

This video-film describes the life story of an imaginary character, Peter, who was a mission worker in a Christian village in Tirunelveli. From his childhood he was brought up by Selvanayagam, his foster father. Peter got married to Marriamma and worked in a village as an independent mission worker. He was well-known for his contribution to the local church and for his friendship with young people. When Peter came to know about Selvanayagam's illegal trade in drugs and foreign goods, he expressed his unhappiness about his activities. Peter refused to support Selvanayagam's candidature in the election for a post in the church committee. This created considerable tension between them. This was heightened when Peter helped another of his friends, Manikkam, to get a teacher's post in a private school. Selvanayagam was particularly angry with Peter for supporting Manikkam as he also had designs on this job for another friend. He became very resentful and even paid some people to murder Manikkam, the friend of Peter.

After the death of Manikkam, Peter's friends exposed Selvanayagam's illegal smuggling business and made it public. Selvanayagam, as a counter measure, went to the police and dishonestly reported that Peter was responsible for the murder and for the unrest in the village. The police arrested Peter and put him in jail. While he was in jail, his wife gave birth to a baby. In the midst of poverty and suffering from abuse, Peter's wife went to a nearby city, where she met a Christian media centre

Director and asked him for a job. Hearing the story of her husband Peter, the director offered her a job and arranged for a lawyer to get him released. While Peter and his wife were returning to their village, a group of people attacked Selvanayagam and left him injured on the road. Peter and his wife found him covered in blood and took him to the hospital. When Selvanayagam opened his eyes he could not believe that the very people on whom he wanted revenge had in fact saved him. He became a committed Christian and went along with Peter to the church. The story ends with the local pastor's words of reconciliation.

ii. Review of '*Thoonhal*'

This film *Thoonhal* was produced for Christian youth in Tirunelveli. It runs for two hours and fifty-two minutes. It interprets certain beliefs using an imaginary story. This film is like a parable using imaginary characters and creates tensions by highlighting the problems of daily life and addressing such issues from a Christian perspective. It displays an imaginary background of a mission worker in which the issues of Christian belief are raised and addressed. For example, at the start Peter attempted to encourage young people to come to the church. One of them told Peter that he would come to the church if he got a job in the church school. Peter replied in the village manner, saying that if he started coming to the church then God would provide him with a teaching job. Peter helped him to find a job in another school. The whole story reflects the theme of the parable of the Good Samaritan indirectly.

In this story the hero suffers rather than wins over the villain and he forgives his enemy rather than taking revenge¹⁶⁰. In this film, the hero and the victim are identified as the same person. This film challenges the whole stereotypic view of the

hero in Indian movies. It portrays Peter as an ideal mission worker who attempts to help the members of the church to find meanings in the gospel. People in Tirunelveli are familiar the language, the characters (such as catechists, sexton and church members) and the background settings used in the story. It includes certain expressions of Christian belief - such as life after death, eternal life, sinners and forgiveness and interprets them through the story. This film implicitly addresses the issue of division in the diocese of Tirunelveli. This diocese has been known for its divisions and problems long before ecumenical initiatives began [Muller 1996:78]. In the context of conflicts among the members of the churches this film is relevant and challenging to the Christian audience through an imaginary and ideal character Peter.

iii. Synopsis of '*Jumbulingam*'

This film tells the real life story of Jumbulingam, a brigand and his encounter with a missionary, Amy Carmichael of Donavoor (Tirunelveli). He was known in the English papers as the Robin Hood of South India [Houghton 1953:275]. Jumbulingam and his brother, Kasi, were businessmen. Kasi was known for mixing low priced goods with quality goods. Jumbulingam was known for his honesty. The village men appreciated Jumbuligam's beliefs in Hindu gods and his charity work. Unfortunately one of the local landlords, Paramasivam, turned against Kasi and informed the police about him. Driven by envy, Paramasivam also implicated Jumbulingam. As a result of persecution by the police, Jumbulingam became a brigand. He used to rob the rich people and distributed the money to the poor. The people respected him even though he was known for his stealing. However his children suffered from poverty and his wife died.

Jumbulingam came to know about Amy Carmichael who worked as a missionary in Donavour. She also wanted to meet him and went into the forest many times to search for him. She met him and promised to take his sons into her orphanage. Carmichael told him about God's love and asked him to surrender to the police. Her care and concern for him changed his life. He surrendered himself to the police but due to the continued persecution he escaped again from the jail and went into hiding. Amy Carmichael often met with him in the forest in order to share the gospel. He continued to rob the rich people and distribute money to the poor. On one occasion Carmichael told him about the thief on the cross and Jesus' promise to the thief. Jumbulingam identified himself with the thief and finally accepted Christ as his saviour. He decided to surrender to the police. He wanted to confess his sins before a cross which he himself made on a hill near Donavour. While he was near that place, the police came and shot him. He died near the cross as a Christian.

iv. Review of '*Jumbulingam*'

The second film *Jumbulingam* was produced for children. It runs for an hour and thirty-four minutes. The settings and the language of these two films are taken from rural Tirunelveli. The story of *Jumbulingam* had touched many people's hearts when it was dramatised by school children in public places around Tirunelveli even before this film was produced. This story shows God's active involvement in the life of Jumbulingam even though he is a criminal. In the efforts of Carmichael to bring him closer to God, the gospel message is presented in such a way that the viewers see themselves either from the perspective of the missionary or from the perspective of Jumbulingam. This film states that the gospel message can change the life of a

robber. It portrays Amy Carmichael as a loving and caring missionary. This film challenges the Christian audience to communicate their beliefs through their actions while trying to persuade a non-Christian audience to taste the love of God as Jumbulingam did.

The film reflects some of the social issues such as the persecution of new converts during the time of mass conversions in Tirunelveli (1800-1850) and the problem of corruption in business [Muller 1980]. It assumes that robbery is a social factor. The film addresses these issues indirectly. Even though Jumbulingam becomes a Christian he is still not accepted by a society which wants him murdered. The role of a Christian missionary was to show her love and care and to leave the rest to follow.

Many Christians and non-Christians live like Jumbulingam involving themselves in the illicit liquor business or in illegal methods of business. The film argues that such ways of life are dangerous, but by experiencing the love of Christ such lives can be changed. This film expects Christians to show God's love to non-Christians in the way Amy Carmichael did through her actions. The story challenges the worldview of the local people by showing the tragic end of Jumbulingam and asks them to avoid such disasters in their own lives and take the better life offered by Christ.

v. Critical Appraisal of the Media

The use of videocassette by the diocese's departments clearly shows that the churches are attempting to engage in the communication process of the audience. While using the media the main purpose is to engage the audience's attention in such

a way that they become aware of the gospel story through Christian communication. The Christian communicator's participation is neither merely to entertain the audience nor simply to deliver the gospel as mere information. Without getting attention of the audiences, it may not be possible to present them with the meanings of the gospel. In that sense Christian communication should not aim merely at effective communication in the sense of getting larger audiences, more video programmes and more elements of attraction. Rather it should be produced in such a way that the audiences read themselves in the gospel and choose the values of the kingdom as their own.

The two video films (*Thoonhal* and *Jumbulingham*) do not reflect and address the social issues that the non-Christian audiences face in their everyday reality. As already pointed out, they do not use the cultural forms that the non-Christian audiences share among themselves. They attempt to pass on the gospel as a single package of information. Christians and non-Christians could have viewed both the video films, if they reflected and addressed the social context in which the audience is living. The video films neither reflect the conflicts between castes nor address the issues of caste problems in Tirunelveli. Most of the church members are converts from outcastes who often ignore the social issues faced by their own people outside the church.

In this context Paulo Freire's understanding of communication could enrich the churches' perspective on communication. The churches should not engage in banking the gospel message on their audience through their video programmes; rather they should enable the audience to think critically and liberate themselves in the light of the gospel story. The two-video programmes discussed above do not

reflect the contemporary context of the audience. Even though the film *Thoonhal* reflects and addresses some of the social issues, these are limited to a Christian context. Thus they ignore economic reality and social problems that are faced by the audiences in their everyday life.

Carey, Freire and Kierkegaard see the communicators and the audiences as equal participants in the process of communication. If non-Christians are participants in a process in which the diocese attempts to become involved, then such films should not exclude non-Christian audiences from constructing the film story. Christian communicators can bear witness to the gospel if their participation leads not only to reflection but also to action – the action of reconciliation and liberation. These video films could have contributed more if they had addressed the issues in the context of both Christian and non-Christian audiences, and used familiar forms and cultural elements to attract the attention of the audience. This does not mean that the diocese should make use of the media and the various forms of communication uncritically.

While engaging in such a communication process, Christian communicators should be aware of the drawbacks in the role of the mass media and the use of traditional forms within the wider context of society. The relationship between the media and the social issues is a complex one and needs to be seen within national and international context. Hamelink [1995:31] strongly argues that there is a threat to participatory communication at global level which for him must be identified and opposed. He recognises the problems of the incorporation of the local community in a ‘globalisation from above’¹⁶¹ which can be countered only by the same local community that initiate a ‘globalisation from below’ [1995:34]. This highlights a

need for Christian communicators to engage in the audiences' communication process, share their concern about such issues and counter such forces together with them. Christian communicators need to be aware of these communication issues and thus enable their respective audience to become aware of these issues through their engagement in the communicators' process. In the interactive perspective on the one hand Christian communicators engage in the community's communication process and on the other hand they need to reflect critically on their participation as well as in other's use of the mass media.

vi. Interactive Role of These Films

First, it should be noted that the people in Tamil Nadu are familiar with the use of television and films as a means of communication. Even though many households have television sets, they come together to view some cultural programmes and films in village centres. Villagers rent videocassettes and view them in this central place. It is a cultural process in which the viewing of video films has evolved as a practice of the community in the villages. The church's decision to participate in such a process should be seen as an example of their willingness to interact with a wider audience.

Film is a popular form of entertainment among the people in Tamil Nadu. Entertainment is provided not only through the story but also through dances and humour. For many villagers it is very expensive to go to a theatre to see a film. Traditionally the centre of the villages were used by folk programme organisers or by those who performed plays or took part in other forms of communication. Even though folk programmes and other forms of communication continue to exist in

villages it is the film that people most like to view. It is the film genre that brings folk forms, drama and other modern forms together and thus replaces the folk programmes at the village centre.

The diocese produced and broadcast the video films because Christian and non-Christian audiences share and view video films in the centre of the village every week. The video films play an important role in enabling the diocese to participate in the communication process of the people in Tirunelveli. The diocese participated in the process of the people by sharing their medium and interacting with them through video films. If the folk forms and other types of village communication had been brought together in Christian videos they could become more popular among non-Christians. But in providing video programmes using forms familiar to the audience an attempt has at least been made to interact with them. The diocese has made a new beginning in its approach to Christian communication.

By giving these examples, I argue that through such means some churches in India have made attempts to interact more effectively with both Christians and non-Christians. It is vital for the churches to involve themselves whole-heartedly, not only through the videocassette ministry but also by using other forms and means of communication that are shared by the people. The video films were distributed to audiences with the help of mission workers who serve in the respective departments. The mission workers would take the cassette to the churches, rent a local television and video player, and show them in the centre of the village. In this way these films were shown in most parts of the diocese. The films enabled the mission workers to interact with Christians and non-Christians which they otherwise could not do.

The popular films use familiar characters and roles that are known to the

audience. Examples of such characters in Tirunelveli are *pannaiyaar* (landlord), police - with their humorous role - and bandits. The church has employed these characters in these two films by displaying Selvanayagam as *pannaiyaar* and the police with humour in *Thoonhal*. Making the video films by using popular genre and character is an attempt by the church to enter into a dialogue with their audience by sharing their process of communication. It also breaks down the barriers between religions by bringing in the non-Christian audience because this is seen as a village programme rather than as a Christian programme.

The involvement of the diocese in the production and distribution of video films demonstrates that the churches in India can participate in the communication process of the people. It also supports the argument of understanding God in terms of participation rather than of purely sending and receiving information. There is a need to share such experiences with other dioceses and to widen their participation not only in the process of Christian communication but also in the process of communication generally. The aim of such involvement is to break down the barriers between religions by interacting with people of other religions. The following section will develop various models based on the study of these films as they can be applied to Christian communication in India.

E. Widening Video Ministry

These video films have demonstrated a growing interest among various departments in the diocese in interacting with the people of Tirunelveli [Narpothagam 1999]. If the principles are adopted as part of the churches' policy and in the training of the pastors by theological institutions, these programmes could help

the churches and their communicators to interact more effectively with their audience in the future. First these programmes need to be directed not merely to a Christian audience but also towards the non-Christian audience who form a majority in Tamil Nadu. Secondly it is vital for the diocese to work with other dioceses in the Church of South India and with other churches such as the Catholic church in Tirunelveli.

Thirdly the diocese needs to consider communicating indirectly as the tension between Hindus and Muslims seems to be increasing. There is also a rise in communal violence between different castes in Tirunelveli [HRW report web 1999]. The best way forward for the diocese is to bring about reconciliation through their participation in the people's process of communication among the various communities. By reducing tensions and conflicts through their programmes, they communicate the gospel indirectly. This study recommends the diocese, as well as other churches and their communicators in India, to translate these principles into their strategies for production, broadcasting and feedback.

The churches in India often give less prominence to an interactive aspect of communication. Even though the diocese uses the media, it cannot interact effectively with the wider public because its programmes do not meet the standard and expectations of the national media. Because of the fear of distorting the gospel, the church finds it difficult to use any other form of communication apart from conventional forms such as preaching and worship. The two video films were analysed in the light of the principles which were developed from the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The study of the programmes shows a need for widening this process to both non-Christian and Christian audiences outside the church. Some findings have been developed from the study of the films. These

findings show that there are problems in the churches' approach to communication and in the theological basis that supports such an approach. The documents of WCC and Pontifical reports reveal similar difficulties inherent in both their approach to Christian communication and also in their theological perspective. Without a sound theological basis further attempts at Christian communication might not be effective like those of some of the earliest missionaries.

i. Strategy for Production

In the production process the strategy is essential for the scriptwriters, editors, artists, technicians and directors in order to produce a programme that reflects people's cultural and social realities. They need to share audiences' religious expressions and to use the forms, means and characters that are familiar to them. To improve the quality of the production, it is not enough to have professionals or highly developed technology. It is particularly important to identify the cultural preferences of the audience. These films would also need to include local cultural forms such as *Kuthiraiyattam* (horse dance) or *Baratha Natyam* (dances for an Indian context) to capture the attention of audiences. The production team should begin by going to audiences for whom they are producing the programmes. They need to listen to audiences to find out about their interests and cultural practices¹⁶². Some of the local audiences who have a good knowledge of traditional forms of communication could be asked to join the production team. This could lead to the growth of a variety of forms and methods for communicating the gospel.

The production team need to be aware of the local issues particularly those that arise from the social and cultural contexts of the audience. By developing a story

from audiences' themselves some of these issues could be addressed indirectly. It is essential to relate the story to the context of audiences so that they might recognise themselves in the story. While communicating the gospel it is vital not only to respect the other's beliefs but also to share and interact with their religious beliefs. If these video programmes are aimed at enabling audiences' to interpret their beliefs and to establish a specific relationship with God, then reference might be made to their religious texts. By sharing and interacting with the audience's belief, many of the social issues could easily be addressed. It is also essential to understand how audiences share their belief among themselves and relate it to their social context. This means going to audiences in order to share the gospel with them just as Jesus did through the parables. The strategy for production must be to recognise audiences as they are and to interact with them indirectly.

ii. Policies for Broadcasting

In broadcasting, the churches need to involve themselves in every possible way to make programmes available to the widest possible audience. In order to do this the churches in India need to develop certain well-defined policies. They should not focus on a single form of production. In order to engage in the communication process at mass level, the churches need to identify the media and the way in which audiences share them. For example the two films (*Thoonhal* and *Jumbulingam*) were shown in Christian villages. If they are to be shown to the Hindu villages, the basic criteria of quality and entertainment need to be met but there cannot be any direct communication of the gospel. If they were to be shown on regional, national or satellite television, then sponsors would have to be found. In order to find sponsors

and to reach wider audiences, these programmes have to meet the quality and expectations set by these media institutions. The quality of the programme must meet the national standard in order to get onto a television channel. Being part of the government, national television does not allow any religious programmes to be shown. Private satellite channels look for entertainment programmes. If the churches produce a film, or a television documentary that meet the national standard, there are possibilities of getting sponsors from companies.

The policies of the diocese in Tirunelveli or the CSI dioceses should be directed towards interacting with the people in Southern India. This means engaging in their communication process through various forms and means. Through the common search for their religious meanings and meanings of life, the churches might effectively enable audiences to see the meanings of the gospel. There needs to be interaction between churches and audiences with reference to both entertainment forms and the media to be chosen (e.g. video films). The churches should make their programmes available to as wide an audience as possible so that many more people would be able to read themselves in their programmes and so come to a relationship with God.

iii. Principles for Audiences' Involvement

The participation of the audience is as important as the process of production and distribution. The interaction of the churches becomes successful if a large number of audiences are involved as viewers. If the production meets these criteria, then the audiences might view these programmes. In order to meet their demands, audiences themselves can be asked about their expectations of a Christian video

programme, or indeed any other programme. If the churches can help the audiences to discuss programmes even before they are produced, then this increases their level of contribution both before and after broadcasting of the programme.

Audience feedback is essential if the next programme is to meet their expectations. If strategy and policies are adopted and developed with the help of these principles for production, broadcasting and feedback, then the churches might be able to interact with a wider audience in a more effective way. By participating in their cultural and social processes, the church might be able to present its principles among various principles that are available to the audiences. By being present, the church can help the audience to establish a relationship with God. These principles are derived for the video films in particular but can also be applied to other forms and methods of communication.

iv. Theological Training

These principles are not only for developing video films or for audiovisual aids but also for improving missionary, educational and other forms of Christian communication in which the churches in India are involved. It is essential to point out different models and ways in which these principles could be developed. In order to encourage ministers, missionaries and theologians to participate and interact with their audience, these principles should be included in theological training and in the communication curriculum of Indian seminaries.

A new theological basis is essential to get an acceptance among Christians to have a sustained interaction with the wider audience outside Christian fold. The present study has provided such a theological basis arising out of the cultural

understanding of communication and has verified it by analysing the parable of the Good Samaritan. In order to relate practice to the theological basis, two films are selected and analysed as examples. Analysing the two films using these principles show the need for developing various models that can be applied to the Indian context. In order to adapt these models, Christian communicators need to begin by listening and learning from the audience about their experiences of God and of the world. They have to identify the audience's cultural forms and means in order to interact with them. Thus the models of Christian communication need to consider the audience's beliefs, worldview and forms of communication. In the following section, various models of communication are developed so that these principles can be translated into practice by the churches in India.

v. Towards a Critical Use of the Media

This study has highlighted the importance of shifting the theological and hermeneutic practices that are developed on the old models of communication to an interactive approach. From this interactive approach the churches are encouraged to share, to participate and to interact with the audience by engaging in their process of communication. It has been argued that without engaging in the audience's process of communication, the churches may not be able to present the meanings of the gospel story. In this interactive perspective, Christian communicators share and interact with the audience's belief, forms of communication and worldview. They engage in the audience's search for social and religious meanings that are relevant to their context. This does not mean that they have to participate uncritically in the audience's communication process.

Three critical issues need to be addressed before using the media in Christian mission and ministry. In order to begin from where the audience is, the Christian communicator is called to attempt to understand critically and empathetically their beliefs, their communicative forms and their worldview. In this interactive perspective this study proposes that the Christian communicator should share the beliefs of the audience. Many Indian theologians have contributed in this field, particularly with reference to empathetic sharing of beliefs with a Hindu audience [Devanandan 1964, Thomas 1987]. While encouraging Indian Christians to engage with other religious people in the search for religious meanings, they have cautioned Christians neither to syncretize their faith nor to be absorbed into other religious faiths. While engaging with Christian and non-Christian audiences together Christian communicators have to maintain a balanced interaction by being critical of their own attempts and to be prepared constantly to examine and to review their products. They also need to take into account both Christian and non-Christian reactions to their programmes.

Secondly Christian communication should reflect and address the issues of the context in which the audience and the communicator live. While reflecting and addressing these social and cultural issues, the Christian communicator needs to interact with the worldview of the audience. It is vital to become aware not only of the local issues but also of the issues at a global level that directly or indirectly affect the lives of the audience. These are not merely social issues but also communication problems because the media at large often reflect and reinforce certain views that contribute to these problems. While communicating the gospel to the audience, the Christian communicator should begin from the context of the audience. In such a

case the context is the framework for interpreting and communicating the gospel. One Indian Christian theologian, M M Thomas states, "Christ's presence (in the Indian society) does not serve the purpose to convert individual Hindus to the Christian faith but to create true humanization in the Indian society" [Fornberg 1995:63]. There is already a recognition among certain Indian Christian theologians of the importance of the contextual interpretation of the gospel story [Nirmal 1978, Massey 1997]. Yet Christian communication attempts to share the meanings of the gospel within the framework of the audience's context and challenges their social set-up in the light of the gospel. Contextual interpretation widens the meanings of the gospel and in turn the gospel story challenges the social meanings. The best way of interacting with the social issues is to communicate indirectly by using stories from the audience's context.

The third issue concerns the use of the media and the forms of communication. While engaging in the audience's communication process using the media and their forms, Christian communicators need to be aware of their role within the wider context. They should not generalise about the impact of the media on the audience. They need to engage in the audience's communication process in such a way as to challenge even the role of global and mass media. Through a video drama the churches can try to bring awareness of the implications of the media on the audience. Through such programmes the audience can be educated so that the mass media become accessible to the audience as a means not only to receive but also to develop their critical views.

It has already been argued that existing social systems of oppression, and the traditional forms of communication that reflect and reinforce such systems, should be

challenged and questioned. Christian communicators need to become aware of these issues in the media industries, and of their role in manipulating information. They can address these issues indirectly in their communication so that the audience might become aware of the problem. While engaging in the audience's communication process, the Christian communicator can work for a balance between maintaining the attention of the audience, addressing the social issues and presenting the gospel story among other stories. This balance would lead to an interaction between the communicator and the audience through which they share the meanings of the gospel.

4. Indian Churches and Various Models of Communication

From the interactive approach, three principles have been identified for the practice of Christian communication in India. Many of the Western models cannot be used in the Indian context because the church is a minority institution. White [1994:3-7] suggests four models of religious broadcasting while recognising other possible models. His first model, religious broadcasting as part of the public service system, is not relevant to the Indian context because the government of India is committed to public service. Government also owns the principal media. There is no separate department for religious broadcasting even though religious programmes are shown from time to time. The second model, religious broadcasting of revivalist evangelical movements, can be found in the satellite channels which carry revivalist Christian programmes. Its impact on the wider public appears minimal, as the majority of viewers are Hindu. The third model, religious broadcasting controlled by, and serving the needs of, an institutional church, is present in Christian radio

broadcasting but from outside India. This type of broadcasting seems to have little effect on non-Christians and Christians alike [Jeyaweera 1978:4].

The church in India has not yet attempted the fourth model, religious broadcasting as 'alternative' media and protagonist of social change. The churches in India have played a role through its involvement in protests and demonstrations and its advocacy for the suppressed people. As most of the media institutions are run by the government or by private companies, this model being the voice of voiceless', may apply to the churches' other forms of communication.

Even though there are opportunities for the Indian churches to use some of the available forms, they have not made use of them. Some of the previous Indian models using methods of direct communication have become irrelevant. They have left the church isolated from the people's processes. The present approach of the churches and their missionary organisations do not address the contemporary issues of Christian communication; rather they alienate themselves by providing their exclusive religious views. These approaches are identified under four models of communication by Pillai [1984:282], based on the experiences of the missionaries in India. They are: Xavier Model of Communication; DeNobili Accommodation Model; Indirect Evangelisation; Liberation Model.

Xavier and DeNobili were Catholic missionaries in Tamil Nadu and the first two models show their approach to Christian communication. Xaviour was a missionary in Tirunelveli between 1542 to 1544. He simply introduced the name of Christ together with Christian ecclesiastical and ethical laws because the receivers were fishermen who were poor, uneducated and polygamous, scandalously superstitious, alcoholic and quarrelsome. His model was to replace their god's name

with Jesus and socialising them into a Christian culture. With the help of the Portuguese army he saved fishermen from the Muslim and Hindu pirates and so they became Christians [Muller 1980:2-3]. DeNobili worked with the presupposition that the audiences' culture and religion cannot be totally reduced to the communicator's culture and religion. He held a view that communicator should become part of the audiences' society by accepting their cultural and religious practices [Pillai 1984:284]. This model is not accepted by the churches or by any of the missionary organisations in India because they think that it leads to religious syncretism.

In the third model, Indirect Evangelisation, churches are encouraged to use educational institutions and social service projects to promote awareness among the people. The aim is to bear witness to Christ, and, secondly, to introduce Christian scripture to non-Christians so that they would learn about the supernatural revelation in Christ and turn into good and loyal subjects. This method is applied mainly to educational and social services but is not given prominence in their media practices. It ignores the contribution of the non-Christian audience's beliefs and cultural forms of communication to the churches in India.

The fourth model is grounded in the theology of liberation. In its organisational form, it assumes an ecclesial praxis, reflecting on the existing patterns of pastoral activities of the church. It requires the church to take on a prophetic role by speaking for the exploited and marginalised untouchables in India. Pillai [1984:294] notes that this model is suspected of encouraging Christians to take up violence as a last resort and it is therefore accused of having deviated from Christ's message of love and self-sacrifice. These models represent most of the church institutions' and missionary organisations' approach towards Christian

communication.

If the church participates in the people's process of communication, then there is no need to separate communicating the gospel from bringing social awareness because communicating the gospel involves bringing people out of their cultural blindness and leading them towards God. Even though the Indian churches and their mission institutions have moved forward, these models are predominant in the approach towards Christian communication. These models have become irrelevant to the present context of Christian communication.

Those who understood the gospel as the story of God's participation made attempts to participate in their own cultural process. They respected their audience and their beliefs and interacted effectively with the gospel by sharing their beliefs and worldview. The models proposed in this section are the extension of these indigenous models. Some of the models and principles that are developed in this section are already under consideration by the churches. Even though a wide variety of models in the Indian context are possible, only four important models are presented below. If the Indian churches considered these models, their communication of the gospel would become interactive and effective.

A. Model for Reconciliation

It is essential for the churches in India to share the gospel with both Christians and non-Christians through all forms of media. Having received the gospel from the missionaries, the churches in India developed a missionary vision and have taken up the challenge of mission for themselves. The missionary institutions in India use a wide range of methods, from tracts to radio, in their interaction with the people.

By preaching the gospel, and by providing information about Christian doctrines to the non-Christian audiences, they attempt to convert them to Christianity [Smith 1962:276].

The churches in India are supporting more than 20 missionary organisations that spread the gospel message through various forms of communication [Arles 1991:180-195]. Christian communicators can be compared with missionaries who serve the churches' mission purpose. Both missionaries and Christian communicators have a mission role through the media to bring about reconciliation among the various religious communities in India. The best model of communicating the gospel in India is to share the message of reconciliation between communities in conflict.

Non-Christians, particularly tribal people, are becoming increasingly aware of their identity and so oppose any form of conversion [India Today web 1999:1]. Both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalist groups bring about this awareness among their religious followers. Because of the increasing role of fundamentalists, the confrontation between Hindu and Islamic communities has become a reality in many parts of India. This tension often leads to conflict and murder between the two communities [Babri Masjid web 1992]. Even though the situation cannot be generalised, religious communities have recently become more suspicious of each other.

Hindus and Muslims, for example, lived together without conflict in many parts of India. Since partition, there has been a growing tension between these two communities which has come to the forefront with the rise of Hindu fundamentalism. Particularly after a Mosque in Ayothia was destroyed by Hindu fundamentalists this tension has turned into a running conflict between the two communities that has

claimed many people's lives [India Tribune 1992:1-3]. The participation of the missionary institutions and the Christian communicators should be aimed at bringing the religious communities together and helping them to live peacefully as they had done for centuries

Christian communicators need to see this as an opportunity to participate in the community building process through all available means. This is possible by sharing the gospel indirectly by using the people's cultural forms, by sharing their beliefs and by interacting with their worldview. It is important for the churches, their pastors, missionaries and their media workers to help religious communities to interpret their own beliefs and worldview in such a way that they can live together. If audiences use particular forms of communication such as audiocassettes or videocassettes, then the communicators should produce filmed events or stories that might help them to be reconciled with other communities.

As this is a very sensitive issue, the genre they use should be familiar to the audience (such as series, documentaries and films) and interpret their beliefs (Hindu or Muslim beliefs) in a way that enables them to live with other religious communities. In bringing about this reconciling act, the love of God is expressed through this form of communication and enables the audience to search for God. By participating in their search for God, Christian communicators might lead them towards the gospel while learning more about their own experience of God. The role of the Christian communicator cannot, however, be limited to one of reconciliation between religious communities. In India there are also conflicts between communities based on caste and race.

While bringing about reconciliation between communities, the Christian communicators remain hidden and interact indirectly with the audience. They share the audience's beliefs and help to interpret them in a changing context where fear and tension are rising among them. Thus missionaries and Christian communicators live the gospel rather than proclaim it. This does not eliminate preaching as a means of communication, but it emphasises the importance of communicating the gospel indirectly in a context where various claims and counter claims of religions have destroyed many people's lives. In this sense Christian communication is not merely a process of proclaiming the gospel and sending information about the churches; it is a process of participating in people's lives. In this process, the gospel is revealed in the participation of the Christian communicator rather than merely through the content of the message.

Missionary organisations and Christian media institutions have to come together in order to produce programmes that aim to bring reconciliation among these communities. This model is possible in practice because the non-Christian audience would not see it as a Christian promotional programme yet they may still see the meanings of the gospel in the churches' participation. In this model a Christian communicator is seen as a missionary who can bring reconciliation between different communities by enabling them to interpret their own beliefs. This missionary model can be identified as a reconciliation model of Christian communication.

B. Development Model

Indian churches have rightly recognised the need for development and growth among people in terms of economic conditions. They offer various social services and a variety of approaches to the poor. For example, in association with VELCOM (Vision for Equipping Local Congregation in Mission), the Department of Mission and Evangelism in the diocese offers assistance of various sorts to people below the poverty line¹⁶³ [Lionel 1991:2-3]. Through education, medical help and other social projects, the churches in India work with the people [Panchagam 1999:78-95].

Even though Indian churches have collaborated with foreign agencies to improve the standard of people's lives through various projects, the elimination of ignorance and beliefs that lead to certain evil practices in society seems to have low priority. These beliefs and evil practices stand in the way of development. A major difficulty is that these beliefs and practices are culturally and socially fixed. Even those within the social set up cannot speak out against them. Instead of maintaining positive aspects of Indian culture, the churches too have been influenced by such ignorant beliefs and practices [Moses 1954:4].

Examples of such evil practices in South India are female foeticide [The Hindu web 1998:1], child labour, caste conflicts, drug smuggling and exploitation of the labourers. Mention has already been made of caste practices among people in different parts of India, and how they impede the development of the masses. It was reported by Human Right Watch (HRW) that from 1996 to 1998, 50 people were murdered in caste-related clashes in Tirunelveli [HRW report web 1999]. In many of the Hindu villages in Tirunelveli the Dalits (untouchables) are not allowed to draw water from the village well [HRW report web 1999:11]. Such caste practices are

based on certain ignorant beliefs [Joshva 1989:29-34]. The churches in Tirunelveli can use their communicating means and forms to help these communities to avoid clashes and live in harmony.

Another example can be taken from a village near Madurai where female infants are killed by administering poison in order to avoid giving dowries (gifts during marriages) [Aravadmudan 1994:2]. Even though this evil practice of killing female infants by poisoning is due to the economic problems there, it is culturally moulded into routine practice. Even if parents do not want to kill their infants, they are forced to kill them to maintain the practice. The churches can interact with these people in order to help to eliminate this practice through their video programmes. A non-governmental organisation concientised the people in this village by communications in local forms [The Week 1999:1]. One of the problems is that the people do not think of them as evil, but see them as part of their social and cultural practices [The Sunday Observer 1997:3]. Those who condemn such practices are considered to be anti-national and anti-cultural.

The churches have to use the local cultural forms of communication to challenge some of these inhuman cultural practices. By using local cultural forms Christian communicators help those communities to reinterpret their beliefs and thus to eliminate their evil practices. Scholars like Chandran [1986:5] and artists like Sahi [1983:21] tried to address these tensions in Indian cultures. In order to interact with these communities, Christian communicators have to go to these communities and learn from their forms, their beliefs and their worldview. By learning and sharing their forms of communication, they can help the audience indirectly to interpret their beliefs and can challenge their worldview. Because most of these communities use

modern media, Christian communicators can interact through such media using their genre and thus communicate reinterpreted beliefs and worldview.

Christian communicators can work together by providing audiovisual programmes that can be shown in Christian schools and colleges. By using local forms such as folk dances, dramas and other forms of communication it is possible to interact with a young audience who might become aware of such inhuman practices. Some of these forms of communication are already being used by the department of communication of the Church of South India, which are helping to bring awareness among Christians and non-Christians. Cultural forms like drama and dances are also used in evangelism [Lorbeer 1949:173; Priestly 1949:173; Peel 1972:12]. These forms have not been used in the audiovisual programmes of the churches, nor used for the social development programmes. Drama and Dance might add a new dimension to Christian communication because the churches' participation would be appreciated and other similarly interested organisations and institutions might also join in this campaign.

If the quality of the programmes is of a high standard, it becomes possible to broadcast them through Doordharshan (the national television) or through All India Radio (government radio)¹⁶⁴. If a community is decaying because of its members' ignorance, the first step of Christian communicators is to help them to reinterpret their beliefs and worldview. By helping the community to discard these evil practices, the communicators provide a chance to express God's love through their participation. This is one of the ways to interact with the people and share the gospel indirectly.

C. Cultural Model

The churches in India need to use the available means to communicate the gospel to both Christians and non-Christians. In the Indian context, there are a variety of cultural forms available to Christian communicators as they participate in the communication process. Theologians have tried in many different ways to interact with the local culture and other religious faiths in order to understand the gospel through the Indian mind¹⁶⁵. In 1983 an attempt was made by the Department of Communication (CSI) to incorporate folk forms into audiovisual means. The department produced an audiocassette and film strips showing dances of the Lambadi and Gonds tribes in South India to communicate the gospel to them [Babu 1983:14]. The gospel could be interpreted through the local forms of communication, particularly through the Indian tradition of story telling. There are a variety of hermeneutic methods and forms available in South Indian culture.

Indian sages used a wider range of communication techniques to help their audience to interpret their beliefs (e.g. dance, drama, telling Puranas (long stories), dialogue, displaying images, arts and yoga). These methods employ different aesthetic elements - excitement, humour, suspense - in order to attract and maintain the attention of the audience [Gorringe 1986]. They also have implicit ways of interpreting people's beliefs and worldview. There are cultural aesthetic elements that have to be mixed with new forms of communication in order to make Christian communication interesting and attractive. Dudde [1955:470] argues that Christian tracts must be attractive and use Indian artistic forms to make them attractive. The CSI Communication Department accepted this fact in its statement about their own participation by saying that, "today if we evaluate our programmes and our efforts to

witness, we may have to confess that often our programmes are ineffectual and uninteresting. They lack the desirable punch” [Babu 1983:13]. There is a wide range of material, talented people, cultural forms, instruments, artistic elements and methods available to Christian communicators to choose from in a South Indian context.

If such cultural forms together with modern aesthetic elements are used in audiovisual programmes, then the churches can contribute both to new hermeneutic forms of the gospel and also to the local culture. Francis [1983:10] identifies the need for using Dravidian cultural forms of communication in order to interact with the people in South India. By seeing it as a hermeneutic method, Christian communicators could introduce new forms of interpreting the gospel in India. Such programmes would have a chance to break down the barriers of religion. For the first time many non-Christians would be able to hear the gospel message related to their own cultural context in their forms of communication.

There is some fear among the churches and Christians that these attempts might distort the gospel message¹⁶⁶. To remove this fear, Christian communicators have to show their Christian audience that cultural elements in India can provide better communicative forms than most Western forms. It is a two way process in which Christian communicators use indigenous forms to interpret the gospel to a Christian audience and at the same time are able to interact with the non-Christian audience. The churches in India can once again interact with people in India as they did through education and social services by sharing the local cultural genre and the audience’s medium and by using their hermeneutic forms. By sharing and using

local cultural means and forms can the churches share the gospel with the wider audience regardless of their religion and race.

D. Participatory Model

Even though the churches in India have their own means of communication, they have to participate in the wider process of communication in which government and private media institutions are engaged. In order to interact with the audience the churches need to be involved in their ongoing search for meanings of life and beliefs. The government media institutions - All India Radio and Doordharshan television - provide opportunities for privately sponsored programmes. The church media institutions can make use of such opportunities in order to interact with a wider audience. Vasanthan [1973:8] argues that even though money is an important factor in producing films, documents and series, the churches can afford to produce and sell their products in Tamil Nadu. There is a great demand for audio and video programmes for entertainment, education, religious and social awareness in these media institutions. The Church of South India has to make use of these opportunities in order to participate and interact with people and to share the gospel indirectly.

It is essential for churches to challenge the wider media practice of the Indian broadcast media and to help them to democratise their systems of communication. The Indian church could bring awareness about the new broadcasting bill (1997) among Christians and non-Christians¹⁶⁷. The bill was originally introduced as the Prasar Bharati Act in 1990. Some additional amendments were accepted in 1997 by the Indian Parliament which allow private radio and television broadcasting in India [Bhandare 1997:1-3]. This bill provides a basis for democratising the government-

owned media institutions in India. Indian churches need to invest in such media institutions or make use of the opportunities in private radio and television stations¹⁶⁸. By exploring the possibilities of engagement, the church has to encourage its members to participate in the process of democratising these institutions of communication in India.

The churches should train personnel for the mass media by introducing into their educational institutions the necessary technical and theoretical training. In order to interact with a wider audience, the churches and their communicators have to share the forms and means with national media institutions. Through such participation the Christian media institutions may be able to show God's love and care for the audience indirectly. At times they could challenge the audiences' worldview by their presence in the public media. If the church isolates itself, then there may not be any place for the wider audience to hear the gospel or learn about Christian principles, and the church cannot simply blame the media for its shortcomings.

In order to participate the churches have to accept the standard and quality as generally accepted to which people are used. But if the church can invest in media equipment and personnel, it has a chance to produce very interactive programmes that could bring social awareness to the audience. Even though the churches' participation is indirect, their involvement would show to the audience God's love and care. This participation could bring many nearer the gospel. The churches need to develop policies and strategies for a practice of Christian communication based on accepted theological principles. The theological institutions, alongside the churches, need to recognise the importance of God's participation in the people's communication process.

These four models are given to enable the church to adapt and participate in the people's process of communication indirectly using all available means. In this, the Indian churches and their communicators can produce a model for other churches around the world, just as they provided an ecumenical model by forming the Church of South India in 1947. The church in India can share the gospel with others while learning about other people's beliefs and worldview. It will do this by bringing about reconciliation, by helping people in their development, by using cultural forms, and by participating in their processes. Unless this interaction is based on the interaction of the churches with God through Christ, the audience will not recognise the gospel message.

E. Interactive Model

Even before the communicators share their message the audiences are engaged in a variety of cultural interactions. Sometimes they participate and interact through the media and this can enhance their cultural interactions. In the South Indian context the members of the village community used to gather together at the centre of the village for folk programmes. It has already been noted that cinema theatres replaced these centres but this meant that the people had to go to city centres to see a film in a theatre. The video cassette player brought the people back to the centre of the village and enhanced the cultural interaction among them. In this cultural interaction people gather together at the centre of the village during the night in order to participate in this ritual practice of gathering, join with other people in viewing the film and discuss the programme afterwards. In order to engage in such

interaction, a communicator has to identify this ritual process of the village communities and participate in their interactive communication process.

This perspective of interactive communication is different from the perspective that is developed from the interactive media by some of the scholars in the field of communication. Plude and Neuman pointed out that the new interactive media such as internet and video-conferencing try to change the concept of culture and communication. The use of the interactive media by a large number of people leads to an interactive culture in which communicator and audience are both learners and participants. This evolution of the interactive culture poses serious challenges for Christian communication. Plude has highlighted the need for identifying an alternative theological basis in order to meet the demands that arise out of this cultural interactivity. In my study communication itself has interactive characteristics even though well enhanced by the interactive media.

Communication is interactive because there are a large variety of media and forms available to communicators. The audience uses each media to satisfy their own interests. The audiences also share certain beliefs, certain worldviews and certain forms of communication even before the communicator participates in such methods. Because of the diversity of beliefs, forms and worldviews the audiences are exposed to different types of religious, cultural and social meanings among themselves through the media. Christian communicators are called to present the gospel meanings among a wide range of meanings that are available to their audience. By engaging in the audiences' communication process and by sharing their beliefs, a Christian communicator can interact with the audience.

This perspective is particularly relevant for Christian communication in South India. Christian communication points towards engaging in a process where the communicator and the audience share and interpret their beliefs and worldviews. In order to interact with the audience the Christian communicator begins from where the audience is and continues to engage in the audience's process of communication until he or she chooses to stand alone before God. Theologically God is portrayed in the Biblical narratives as one who continues to interact with his people despite their limitations. By recognising this perspective Christian communicators in India, particularly in Tirunelveli, should continue to engage in the Christian and non-Christian audience's communication process and present the meanings of the gospel indirectly.

Interactive characteristics of communication are important because they demand a Christian communicator to work with other communicators who have similar interests. These characteristics give importance to the equal status of the participants, particularly the communicator and the audience. In order to enable the churches to give importance to these characteristics of communication, a theological and hermeneutic basis for such perspective must be developed. By identifying such characteristics in the teachings of Jesus, this study argues that the churches should consider the importance of this interactive aspect of communication. This study has developed this interactive perspective by bringing together Carey's ritual view, Freire's liberation view and Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication. The study of the parables and the video cassette ministry has shown that the principles of an interactive perspective would certainly enable Christian communicators to share

and to participate in the construction of the gospel meanings together with their audiences.

5. Conclusion

The three principles that were developed from Jesus' use of the parables are relevant to the practice of Christian communication in India. If Indian churches and Christian media institutions give proper considerations to these principles their communication would become a more interactive and participatory one. In practice the churches can multiply the media and develop the best forms of communication, but without a proper theological basis and a clear policy, such practices may not promote interaction with a wider audience. Christian communicators have to learn from Jesus himself. Jesus shared his hearers' beliefs and helped them to interpret such beliefs. Without sharing the audience's beliefs, Christian communicators may not have a chance to communicate the gospel to them. Jesus also used his hearers' form, genre, characters and method of communication in order to interact with them.

By sharing what the audience recognise as their genre, means and methods will the Christian communicator be able to participate in their process. Jesus interacted with his hearers' worldview by reflecting and addressing their social and cultural issues. It is vital for Christian communicators to reflect and address contemporary social issues. These principles are particularly relevant to the Indian context, as the church has isolated itself from the mainstream communication process.

At a time when different religions make claims and counterclaims, the churches and Christian communicators in India have to participate in the people's

communication process indirectly. The diocese of Tirunelveli has set an example by producing video films, thus demonstrates opportunities that are available to the churches. The four models of interactive communication show how the churches can effectively communicate the gospel indirectly in an Indian context. If these principles of Christian communication and their underlying theological basis are developed further in theological institutions, they will provide a new perspective on communication. A new hermeneutic method has been identified in this study in order to demonstrate that the gospel and the Biblical narratives could be interpreted using the modern media. The conclusion of this research will show how these principles can be developed into a theological curriculum and into church policies in order to change the current approach towards Christian communication.

Conclusion

Relevance of the Study of Parables and Principles of Communication

This study has demonstrated the importance of the role of the audience in Christian communication. To give importance to the audience's role in sharing the gospel, the churches need to adopt certain culturally relevant principles of communication. Other scholars have studied this issue, but my research has used a New Testament hermeneutic method. A detailed study of the parables of Jesus has discovered the differences between Jesus' way of communication and the churches' perspectives on communication. To address this issue, it is proposed that the churches adopt a theological basis for an interactive perspective.

This study has pointed out some of the limitations of the churches' current principles of communication by analysing the WCC Assemblies' reports and Pontifical Commission documents. Although these documents show an awareness of cultural contexts, they give prominence to two main perspectives on communication - instrumental and effect-centred and give less emphasis to the interactive characteristics of Christian communication.

To communicate the gospel, Christian communicators have to begin from the where the audience is. By sharing the audience's belief, their worldview and their forms of communication, Christian communicators can participate in their processes and engage with them in the search for meanings that are relevant to their lives. They attempt to take part in their audience's process of communication in order to share the gospel and to interact with their audiences. This form of indirect communication can be very effective. Carey's ritual approach provides a platform from which to

identify a basis for the understanding of communication as a process within the context of other socio-cultural processes. In this approach communication is seen as an ongoing process in which the communicator and the audience participate to construct, mediate and interpret social values and religious beliefs.

As the main aim of this study is to develop a theological basis for Christian communication, Kierkegaard's comments on Jesus' use of the indirect method of communication is referred to. Kierkegaard indicates that both the teacher (a communicator) and the learner (audience) have to stand alone before God and in effect both are learners. Ethical meanings are drawn out of the learners rather than imposed on them. Thus religious and ethical meanings are presented among a wide range of meanings through an indirect form of communication, together with the aesthetic elements, so that learners may identify themselves and stand alone before God.

Theologically God is seen in my study as an active participant in the human communication process regardless of its limitations. Some Biblical narratives indicate that God's methods of communication with his audience were interactive in character. This theological view has not been given sufficient prominence in the interpretation of such narratives or in the communication approaches of the churches, though it was explicit in some of the parables of Jesus. From this theological concept certain hermeneutic principles relevant to the context of Christian communication have been developed in this study.

In order to develop hermeneutic principles for this approach, this study has analysed Jesus' method of communication, particularly through the parables. Having analysed the Parable of the Good Samaritan this study has supported the belief that

the synoptic gospels present Jesus as one who participated fully in his hearers' communication process. He went to the place where his hearers were. He shared their beliefs and their religious expressions. He used the characters, forms and aesthetic elements that were familiar to them. He used story forms in order to hold their attention. His parables reflected and addressed issues within their social context. By encouraging them to imagine the context of the parables, he enabled them to realise certain social and religious meanings. He took part along with them in their search for meanings. He presented his own meanings among various other meanings that were available to them. The parables were understood within the wider context of Jesus' teachings as shown in the gospels. These interactive characteristics of communication in the parables of Jesus have been developed and translated into principles of Christian communication.

The relevance of these principles to a particular context of media practice has been analysed by referring to the video ministry in the diocese of Tirunelveli and to two video films that were produced by the diocese. It has been argued that if these principles had been adopted these films would reach a wider audience than at present. After analysing these two films, this study has proposed a few models of Christian communication that are relevant to video ministry and to Christian media practice in a South Indian context. This study has developed an interactive method of presenting the meanings of the gospel to an Indian audience. An alternative hermeneutic method has been proposed in which the interpreter is aware of the fact that meanings arise not only from the content or context of the communicator but also from the interaction between communicator and audience and from the audience's context. In this case the Biblical narratives could be interpreted within the wider social and

cultural context of the communicator and of the audience.

This study views Christian communication as a hermeneutic process in which audiences are enabled to interpret their beliefs and to relate them to their own context. This study has strongly argued that social meanings and religious meanings are inseparable and so ethical principles have bearing on one's relationship with God. Enabling audiences to see themselves in the light of their relationship with God may help them to understand their relationship with their neighbour. As these ethical meanings are presented through an indirect method the audience is left to choose whether or not to believe and to live a life of higher social values. There is an emphasis in this study on the need for the churches to involve themselves in the wider process of communication in which communities and nations are engaged. This suggests the need for a theological training based on the principles and models of an interactive approach. This author is particularly concerned to make this study relevant to the context of theological training in India.

1. Relevance to the Indian Theological Training

This research addresses in the ongoing concern of Indian Christian theologians who attempt to communicate the gospel while maintaining a dialogue with other religions. Since days of the missionaries, the use of the media has been a matter of discussion as has already been indicated in the previous chapter. The primary concern of this study is to encourage Indian Christian theologians to realise that the communication of the gospel in India is best achieved in an indirect way, particularly in the present context where Christian missionaries are persecuted and the churches are attacked in many parts of India. The previous chapter has presented

a number of models for the indirect communication of the gospel.

This study has considered many issues that may arise within the context of theological seminaries in India should they aim to provide future training for theological students in the field of Christian communication based on these principles. These principles would encourage theologians to realise that they are learners together with their audience, whether they are Christian or non-Christian. By being present in their audiences' communication process and by interacting with them, theologians are able to bear witness to the gospel. While participating in their process the communicator can present meanings of the gospel among a wide range of meanings so that the audiences can relate them to their beliefs and to their context. This study is not only relevant to the field of Christian communication but also to the interpretation of the gospel in an Indian context and to the context of dialogue with other religions.

In hermeneutics, this study has shown the complex task of identifying meanings from a text. It has pointed out that the meanings that arise from the teachings of Jesus, particularly from his parables, bring together the hearers' beliefs and worldview. The meanings are presented in such a way that the hearers have to make a decision concerning their faith and to act accordingly. Meanings that are relevant to the hearers' context are thus presented as an inescapable choice, even though other meanings are not excluded.

This study has shown also the problem of the multiplicity of meanings that arise from the interaction between the communicator and the audience. For example, if a narrative in the New Testament is to be interpreted, then it is essential to consider the socio-cultural, political, religious and communication processes in which such

narratives were originally developed. This is relevant to the Indian context, because in a hermeneutic sense Indian theologians need to demonstrate that Jesus was part of the cultural and social environment within which he participated with his hearers in their search for meanings relevant to their religious belief. As part of their mission and ministry, Indian students of theology should be encouraged to participate in the audience's communication process both inside and outside the Christian community. Unless they are trained to see their cultural forms from an interactive perspective they may isolate themselves.

As to dialogue between Christians and Hindus, theologians should recognise themselves as participants and learners. The former Bishop of Tirunelveli Diocese Bishop Stephen Neill, prophetically states in a similar vein:

On all this the Christian cannot compromise. Yet his approach to other forms of human faith must be marked by the deepest humility... He must as far as imagination will permit, expose himself to the full force of these other faiths in all that they have that is most convincing and most alluring. He must rejoice in everything that they possess of beauty and high aspiration. He must put himself to schools with them, in readiness to believe that they may have something to teach him that he has not yet learned... He must listen with respectful patience to every criticism that they have to make both of Christian thought and Christian practice [1984:32-3].

When non-Christian audiences recognise that Christians are taking part in their search, they may recognise the meanings of the gospel through our witness. This is not a process of indirectly converting non-Christian audiences to Christianity but of joining in their processes so that they have a chance to hear about the gospel story. The primary task of theologians in the dialogue is to enrich their faith by taking part in an on-going search with Hindu believers while presenting the meanings of the gospel to them in their own way.

It has been pointed out in the previous chapter that in the present context of India today the Christian approach to dialogue needs rethinking. A possible way forward is to adopt a process of interaction rather than to attempt to 'influence' the audience through dialogue. Christian communicators in India need to present their own meanings of God and life while enabling audiences to interpret their beliefs. Churches and Christian communicators need to be open-minded. By listening to their Christian and non-Christian audiences churches and Christian communicators may be able to explore wider meanings of the gospel in greater depth. During this interaction non-Christians may enrich their beliefs in the light of the meanings of the gospel presented to them.

2. Relevance to the Indian Christian Media and Communication Practice

The churches should encourage the interactive approach to Christian communication. This study therefore emphasises the need for training theological students in using the principles that have been developed. Some of these principles are not only applicable to Christian audiovisual media practices, but also to preaching and worship services. A practical method of preaching an interactive sermon would be for the minister to go to where the people are.

In South India 'street mission' is still a common form of communication. Christians go, sing songs and preach the gospel to non-Christians in the villages. In a village the place where the people can be found is the *Grama Panchayat* (village centre). The best way to interact is to go to this centre and use their forms of communication to share the gospel story. If some of the local cultural forms such as

Therukoothu (Street plays), *Kummiattam* (traditional dance) and *Poikuthirai* (horse dance) are used, then there would not be any objection to the sharing of the gospel. At the same time, communicators would learn to construct meanings along with their audiences. It is important to introduce various cultural forms besides preaching and worship (e.g. *Villu Pattu* – telling stories through music). Some of the models developed in the previous chapter are relevant to the context in the South Tamil Nadu regions.

In their weekly and monthly magazines, churches can encourage their audiences to write stories, poems and news. By going to the audience, editors can identify different styles of magazines or journals that they prefer and so adopt some of those forms. From the interactive approach the editor of the magazine becomes a channel through which the audience can express themselves. Other regional and national newspapers and magazines develop particular styles in order to increase circulation. The churches can learn from their methods and techniques and change their formats in order to reach out to wider sections of the audience. It is not only the forms but also the content and its meanings that need to be relevant to the audience's beliefs and their context. These characteristics are also part of interactive communication.

In radio broadcasting, too, the churches can use a variety of cultural forms to reach a wider audience. The production team could visit selected villages to learn about the way they celebrate their festivals. They need to identify the forms of communication, the social issues and the religious beliefs that their audiences share among themselves. Villages have developed their own distinctive forms of music, dance and stories. Social and cultural issues, such as caste clashes, could be reflected

implicitly in a drama series or documentary programme. The churches need to identify the way in which the audiovisual media have brought about changes in the culture of the audience in India. By identifying this process, the churches could interact with their audiences in the same way that they interact among themselves. Through engagement in their communication process, the meanings of the gospel need to be presented in a way that enables the audience to interpret their beliefs and worldview.

While producing a video-programme the producers, the minister-in-charge and others need to consider possible ways of engaging with a wider audience. They need to use forms and means that are familiar to the audiences with whom they are trying to communicate. A range of programmes can be produced to meet the needs of different cultural and social groups. The churches need to use every possible medium and share an appropriate form of communication in order to reach both villagers and urban people.

3. Relevance to the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Commission

This study has given high priority to an interactive perspective of communication and has sought to provide a theological basis for this perspective. It is important for the churches to join in the audience's search for meanings. Global bodies such as the WCC and Pontifical Commissions need to emphasise the cultural aspect of communication and see the communication process within the wider social environment, and within the context of other social processes. In a context where multiple meanings co-exist, it is probably more effective to present meanings of the

gospel by an indirect method. When some of the meanings in a particular context lead a society towards conflict and division, the churches need to enable people to become aware of the gospel message. The churches should be persuaded to develop principles of indirect and interactive communication and to work together to combat such social problems. This could also provide a basis for ecumenical co-operation among different denominations.

The interactive approach takes the dialogic approach a stage further by breaking down the barriers between the church and the secular. The church as well as the secular world is engaged in its own way in the search for meanings. Through a mutual sharing of experiences in the construction of meanings, related to their belief and to their worldview, both can recognise their limitations and the difficulties encountered in their search, and can interact between themselves in the process of learning about God and about life.

In this process the secular view and the church view do not converge but rather help each other to come closer to God. Without sharing and participating with audiences from within and outside the church, Christian communicators may isolate themselves and may not have a chance to share the meanings of the gospel more widely. Future WCC Assemblies and Pontifical Commissions need to consider and develop this theological basis of interactive Christian communication and help their respective churches to engage in the wider communication process.

4. Further Research

Once the interpretative methodology has been used to develop a theological basis, future research could be done on other parables of Jesus. A similar study could be done on other narratives of the gospels such as miracle stories and Jesus' other sayings in order to demonstrate that meanings arise not only from content, or from the overall teachings of Jesus (communicator), but also from the audience's engagement and their context. This study has established a method for interpreting New Testament narratives and stressed the need for analysing them within a wider context of communication in order to evolve new meanings.

In the field of communication, an interdisciplinary approach should be encouraged on the basis of the principles developed in this research. The hermeneutic approach could well be studied with reference to the use of the Internet and new forms of communication that are increasingly shared by the wider audience in India. The Internet and video-conferencing may provide an ideal form for interaction. For the majority of Indian people, access to such media is still expensive. Yet the churches and the seminaries can provide interactive web pages. Internet communities work with the concept of interaction where members can freely share their views. Such interactions are often unfruitful because the participants can differ in their views.

Everyone in this interaction is a learner and an enquirer. There is an easy way to disagree and present conflicting views. India will probably have 1.5 million users of the Internet online by the end of 2000 [India World 1999:1-3]. Already the Indian government has begun to allow private companies to invest in the Internet connections. The churches should make use of this medium and so interact with a

wider audience. Through their web pages they could not only present information and the gospel story but also listen to what the people expect from the churches and take note of their criticisms.

These are a few research issues that can be taken up by theological students in India. As already stated the contexts within India differ widely and students from the North East of India might find the social issues identified in this study irrelevant. They should be encouraged to take up a study of interactive communication within their own context. Ministers who work for radio or television could develop practical principles outlined above that are relevant to them.

5. Possible Outcome of This Research

This study will be presented to the Tirunelveli Diocese for consideration in developing the diocese's communication department. After a copy of my proposal was sent to the bishop in 1997, the children's department produced two video programmes which adopted popular forms of communication such as local dances and humour to interpret the meanings of the gospel. After receiving my proposal in 1998, the Tirunelveli Diocese Department of Children's Mission encouraged an independent media organisation to produce a video programme titled *Kadhai Sollava* (Shall I Tell a Story). Some of the forms include Bharatha Natyam (Indian dance), folk dances, modern dances, small dramas and humour.

The local cable network has shown the video programme to a wide range of viewers because it basically provides entertainment and yet highlights some of the social and cultural values indirectly by relating them to the audience's belief. The

church's willingness to interact with the wider audience by engaging in their communication process is commended by this study. This shows that there are possibilities of participating with a Christian and non-Christian audience in their search for meanings. By engaging in such a process the churches in India can bear witness to the gospel and may lead many to see the relevance of its meanings.

In the video programme the Parable of the Sower is interpreted using various cultural forms such as dance and local music which are familiar to the audiences in Tirunelveli. As the author is expected to train theological students in India in the field of Christian Communication, he could encourage them to take up some further research. This study offers Indian theological scholars an alternative way to present the gospel story while they themselves can learn from being participants in an interactive process.

6. Concluding Remarks

Christian communication is an ongoing hermeneutic process that becomes effective if the communicator can interact with audiences as equal partners. The gospel story is to be shared with all people regardless of religion, race and region. In Jesus' teachings the meanings of the gospel were presented in the form of a parable because his hearers were familiar with such forms. They were presented within the framework of the social matrix so that his hearers could interpret their beliefs and relate them to their context. This study has argued that there is a difference between Jesus' principles of communication and those of the churches. This difference lies mainly in the emphasis on the interactive characteristics of communication. These

were given primary emphasis in the teaching of the parables of Jesus but seem to be of little importance to today's churches.

As meanings arise from diverse sources, including the communication process, the effect-centred attitude of the churches needs to be questioned. A Christian communicator is called to present the meanings of the gospel among a wide range of meanings indirectly. Some of the audience may recognise these meanings and may come closer to the gospel and establish a relationship with God. By relating to the audiences' belief and to their context, and by aesthetically leading them to a decision to choose the meanings of the gospel, the Christian communicator may bear witness to the gospel story. Thus the intellectual appeal to arrive at an ethical conclusion would be an unnecessary aim for Christian communication. This study invites the churches to recognise the importance of this interactive perspective, and its theological basis of communication, and to adopt the principles that are identified here.

¹ Members of a community share a variety of meanings such as religious or cultural meanings. These meanings are conveyed among them using certain expressions (such as Kingdom), characters (such as Sower) and narratives (parable).

² Christian communicators are primarily those ministers and missionaries who work in the churches' media institutions.

³ The word 'form' is often used to designate a genre or literary type (lyric form) or for patterns of meter, lines, and rhymes [Abrams 1999:101]. In this study the word 'form' is used from a communication perspective to refer to various forms of communication such as the oral form or written form etc.

⁴ Malayalam Harrison Company owns the rubber estate. The place is called *Kazhuthurutti* near *Thenmala* (Quilon District). The churches are in *Nedumpara* and the tribes are in *Mampalathura*.

⁵ This field was taken over by the Indian Missionary Society in 1995 with a full time missionary and with two evangelists.

⁶ Certain Hindu fundamentalists claimed a mosque in Ayothya in northern India was the birthplace of Ram - an incarnation of one of their gods, Vishnu. They destroyed the mosque in order to build a Ram temple amidst wide condemnation of their action. This led to large scale violence between Muslims and Hindus in India.

⁷ This study recognises invaluable contribution of World Association of Christian Communication to the churches' understanding of communication. This study restricted its analysis only to WCC and Pontifical reports on communication.

⁸ I have borrowed this term from Halloran's [1995:2] paper on the 'Key problems in Social Science Research – Research methods and management'.

⁹ The word 'media' refers to those means of communication that are shared by the audiences and used by the communicators. It includes media such as loud speaker, television, radio and computers.

¹⁰ WACC includes communication professionals, media practitioners, educators, academics, church and community leaders, as well as development groups and ecumenical agencies [WACC Web 2000].

¹¹ WACC publishes journals such as *Media Development and Action* enabling communication scholars and media practitioners to discuss issues relating to communication, Christian values and development. WACC's official statements are made available to the churches around the world. [WACC web 2000].

¹² This can be found in their main report:

The pernicious influence of the media must be recognised, and addressed in such a way as to transform the media into a positive instrument, to eliminate stereotyped prejudices and discriminatory attitudes with regard to race and sex values [Gill 1983:88].

¹³ The Harare Report states:

The WCC should continue to explore the tremendous potential opened up by technological developments in the area of communication, while at the same time remaining attentive to the challenges posed by contemporary mass media, particularly in promoting consumerist values and in widening the gap between rich and poor, powerful and powerless [WCC Web 1999:25].

¹⁴ When these documents refer to dialogical or incarnational theological perspectives, the applications to the practice of the media are not clear.

¹⁵ In the New Delhi WCC Assembly (1961), Christian communicators were called upon to be listeners first, and share the concerns, aspirations and the language of youth, of workers and of intellectuals in order to communicate the gospel to them. They were encouraged to respect other religious beliefs and to search for a common language in which the hearers and the communicator could understand each other [Hooft 1962: 82-3]. In this document the churches were asked to dialogue with the audience by listening to them and by sharing their language. The Christian communicators were called to show how the gospel could meet the need of the times, as they understood it.

¹⁶ The report states:

Jesus Christ is God's communication at its clearest, costliest and most demanding. ... Christian communication is about Jesus Christ - the Life of the World. ... At its most effective it is what comes out of authentic experience. It shares one's own life with others, as Jesus did. It meets people where they are, as Jesus did. It empowers people to tell their stories as happened in the case of Zacchaeus [Gill 1983:104].

¹⁷ Via [1974:109] defined genre as a generative matrix which by selection and combination of textemes, linguistic functions and other phenomena produces ever-new texts of its generic type which are transformations of each other. Texteme is a formal unit of meaning larger than a word which belongs to the basis or deep structure of competence.

¹⁸ The New Delhi report identified different categories among the audience such as youth, the worker and the intellectual. It asked the churches to win their support by sharing their concern, sympathising with their aspirations and by learning their language. This report addressed the issue of developing the content of communication. While proclaiming the

gospel, the churches are asked to be sympathetic and to understand other religious faiths and to use words that the audience can understand [Hooft 1962:82-3].

¹⁹ Variables in the communication process mean those characteristics with which this process can be analysed such as audience age, or the medium (television/Internet).

²⁰ The source variables are credibility (sources with high credibility are very effective), homophily (the degree to which interacting individuals are similar in certain attributes), selectivity and technology (use of simple television to Digital television). The receiver variables are demographic characteristics (age, gender, social and economic status, ethnic factors, intelligence), psychological characteristics (self-esteem, aggressiveness, prior attitudes), listening ability (technological output, listening barriers) and feedback. The variables in content include genre (films, news, documents) nature of the medium (visual or aural message), language, and meanings [Burgoon 1994: 79-121].

²¹ Those experiences that deal with pleasure and entertainment. By referring to Warshaw (1964), Carey defines popular art as an 'immediate experience'. Carey argues that one can find within popular art is the creation of particular moods such as joy and particular motives such as erotic. He explains this by giving an example. In popular music the difference between commercial love songs and war protest songs is that they reflect the tastes of audiences for different modes of casting up experience [1989:66].

²² The word 'aesthete' is defined by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* [1933(1):30] as one who professes a superior appreciation of what is beautiful and endeavours to keep out his ideas in practice.

²³ For Kierkegaard the learner is an individual person. An interpreter of Kierkegaard [Jansen 1997:127] argues that his themes are relevant to new interactive media, such as computers but not to mass communication. In my study, I assume the audience constitutes individuals who share certain culture, beliefs and medium among themselves. By participating in this shared sphere, the Christian communicator's participation in the process of communication might enable the individuals in the audience to read themselves in their participation. They might be persuaded to come to the process of becoming.

²⁴ In this art the communicator reduces himself to nobody and exists in what he communicates. The communicator and communication becomes one, but if the communicator is dialectically qualified then all direct communication becomes an impossibility [Kierkegaard 1941A:132].

²⁵ I use the word 'Christ' because of Kierkegaard's use. Later in my research I will use 'Jesus' while referring to parables, as the New Testament scholars refer to Jesus. The communicator and communication become one, but if the communicator is himself

dialectically qualified then all direct communication becomes an impossibility

²⁶ Kierkegaard accepts that direct communication is a necessary first step in ethical-religious communication where people become acquainted with the contents of the Christian message [1967 (1):653]. He also points out that Christian communication must end in witnessing. This he identifies as direct communication [1967 (2):1957]. For him witnessing expresses in the recipient's life what he or she has come to believe [1967 (1):659]. He maintains this contradiction by noting that what seems to be direct is not direct any more because it deals with faith.

²⁷ By quoting Kierkegaard, Weber notes the basic thrust that if God has the right to employ direct communication and chooses indirect communication instead, then we humans, or derivative spirits have little recourse but to adopt this as our norm and practice [Weber 1993:69].

²⁸ Christendom, in Kierkegaard writings, points to the church institutions even though there is no explicit reference to the church as Christendom. In the *Practice in Christianity*, Kierkegaard writes, '...which Christendom has laboured for these many years' [1991:95]. In *Training in Christianity*, he compares the triumphant church with an established Christendom [1941:207].

²⁹ [Kierkegaard 1941:96]. In Matthew 11:1-6, Jesus does not answer John's disciples' question directly. That is, he requires faith, and therefore to an absent person cannot make a direct communication.

³⁰ If the audiences share entertainment forms of communication (such as television series) as part of their cultural interaction, the Christian communicator should use such forms in order to begin from them.

³¹ My study is aware of Buber's concept of dialogue. He argues that *Thou* precedes *I* and only through the *thou* that a person becomes *I*. Commenting on Buber, Emmanuel [1999:108] points out the need for the churches to come out of their truth-claims in order to have dialogue with 'others'. In my study it is argued that the churches present their meanings among a wide range of meanings.

³² I am aware of some the discussions regarding this passage by the commentators. By referring to Akkadian Documents from Ugarit, Mendelsohn [1956:18] argues that the Samuel's account is an authentic description of the anti-monarchical movement of that period. Noth [1960:172] points out that this passage in 1 Samuel (8:1-22) was added by Deuteronomic historians in order to support the anti-monarchic movements. Hertzberg [1964:72] states that here one of the basic features of world history emerges: the struggle of man against God. He points out that while making the people aware of the danger of

kingship, the Lord accedes to the will of the people.

³³ They are images, settings, words, forms, dramatic plots, unexpected twists, and endings that were used in order to bring the hearer into the story. The story follows a three factor aesthetic movement by 'setting a scene', 'dramatising the problem', and 'giving an unexpected end'.

³⁴ The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects [Abrams 1999:224].

³⁵ For Jülicher [1899] allegory constitutes a series of metaphors taken from the same sphere and arranged to form a narrative whereas the similitude contains an expanded simile, which compares two thoughts or sentences, each of which contains a relationship. There are groups of parables (imaginary stories related to past time that contain a general truth) and example stories (an illustration of truth).

³⁶ In Matthew: Mustard seed 13:31-32; Unleavened Bread 13:33; Hidden Treasure 13:44; Pearl Merchant 13:45-46; Net 13:47-48; Vineyard 20:1-15; Feast 22:2-13; Talents 25:14-30; and other gospel parallels.

³⁷ In Matthew: False Prophets 7:16-19; Two Houses 7:24-27; Children Crying in the Streets 11:16-19; All from Heart 12:35; Unfaithful Servant 24:45-51; In Mark: Doctor 2:17; Old and New 2:19-20; House against House 3:23-27; In Luke: Finding Fault 6:41-42; Good Fruit 6:43-45; Forgiveness 7:41-42; Eye and Light 11:33-36 and other parallels; Building House & King and War 14:28-33; Unjust Steward 16:1-8.

³⁸ In Matthew: Unforgiving Servant. 18:23-34; Rich Man. 19:23-24; Responsible Son 21:28-32; King and Judgement. 25:31-46 and other gospel parallels. In Luke, Good Samaritan 10:30-36; Rich Fool. 12:16-21; Lost sheep 15:4-6, Lost Coin 15:8-9, Prodigal Son 15:17-32; Rich Man and Lazarus 16:19-31; Pharisee and Tax Collector 18:10-14.

³⁹ According to Mark 4:20, Jesus compares the good soil with those who hear the word, accept it and produce a crop - thirty, sixty and even a hundred times what was sown (NIV). It seems that at times the response could be thirty or sixty percent.

⁴⁰ Some examples are found in the Synoptic gospels - Mk 4:1-20 (|||els Mt. 13:1-23; Lk. 8:4-15), Mt 7:24-27 (|||els Lk. 6:47-49); Mt 13:24-30, 37-43.

⁴¹ Augustine, (*Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, 2.19 - Sermon, 121) interprets this parable by saying

A Samaritan passed along, distant in blood, in mercy a neighbour, and he did what you know. And in this Samaritan the Lord Jesus Christ would have Himself to be understood [Tr 1865:881].

⁴² Origen comments (Hom 34) on Lk 10:25-37

The man who was going down is Adam. Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. ...The manager of the stable is the head of the church, to whom its care has been entrusted. And the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Saviour's Second Coming [Tr by Lienhard 1996:138].

⁴³ In the third edition of the Parables of the Kingdom in 1965 Dodd shifts from his earlier view towards a compromising view of eschatology [Dodd 1965]. From the perspective of a realised eschatology the meanings of the kingdom were proclaimed through the parables in such a way that they are to be realised in and through the teachings and ministry of Jesus.

⁴⁴ Barton [1984:33] argues that this term must be left untranslated, because 'setting-in-life' conveys very little unless one has already learned the meaning of the German.

⁴⁵ For Fuchs, Jesus brought his understanding of his situation before God and in the world with the hope of creating the possibility of the hearer's sharing that situation.

⁴⁶ A story is an objective statement creating a world of events and persons who are real from the viewpoint of that created world whereas a discourse is characterised by the use of 'I' and 'you', adverbs like 'today', the present and future tenses, and its evaluative statements [Via 1974:107].

⁴⁷ Examples of those parables that interpret the kingdom of God are the parable of the Weeds (Mt 13:24-30), the parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt 13: 31-32; parallels Mk 4:30-32; Lk 13:18-19). The parable of the Good Samaritan is an example for the interpretation of eternal life (Lk 10: 25-37). An example for prayer is the parable of the judge and the widow (Lk 18: 1-8). The example for Parousia is the parable of the pounds (Lk 19: 11-27).

⁴⁸ The examples are the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16: 19-31), the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25-37), the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Mt 18:23-35) and the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

⁴⁹ The hermeneutic process was an ongoing process in which Jesus and his audience engage together in order to interpret their faith and this relates it to their context. The parable enabled them to interact in this process.

⁵⁰ e.g. Prayers – Pr Man 1-15; Sir 21:5 (prayer of a poor man); 35:17 (prayer of humble); Tob 3:16; Forgiveness – Sir 17:29, 18:12 Dn 9:9; the day of Judgement – 2Es 7:43, 12:34; Wis 16:18. The examples from the rabbinical texts are B Shabb 153a - repentance; T Bab Kam 7:4 - Decalogue; M Abot 2:8 – Law. These texts are all later in date but it would also be possible to cite earlier Jewish texts e.g. repentance in the Decalogue in Philo.

⁵¹ Later sources such as the writings of Josephus point out that the Pharisees locate the souls of both the righteous and the ungodly in Hades (Ant 18.14; BJ 21.63).

⁵² The story and its context (Mt 22:1; Lk 14:15-16) are different in Luke and Matthew which shows that the construction of the meanings continued even after Jesus [Scott 1989:165].

⁵³ Sir 9:10 Forsake not an old friend, for a new one does not compare with him. A new friend is like new wine; when it has aged you will drink it with pleasure. Sir 11:2-3 Do not praise a man for his good looks, nor loathe a man because of his appearance. The bee is small among flying creatures, but her product is the best of sweet things. Sir 28:11-12 A hasty quarrel kindles fire, and urgent strife sheds blood. If you blow on a spark, it will glow; if you spit on it, it will be put out; and both come out of your mouth. Sir 47:17 For your songs and proverbs and parables, and for your interpretations, the countries marvelled at you.

⁵⁴ In the Testament of Job (20: 8-10), the description of worms on the body of Job after Satan's permission to deal with his body adds aesthetic elements to the original story of Job. The testament (21:1-4) portrays the physical and mental condition of Job in a story-like narrative that would certainly bring a hearer or a reader closer to his position and add more sympathy for his condition.

⁵⁵ In Palestinian Talmud (Y Ber 1:9) R. Simeon b Yohai narrated a parable about a traveller who encountered a wolf, a lion and a serpent on his way. In Aboth de Rabbi Nathan (ARN 38 - The poor widow and her two sons) and in Palestinian Talmud (Y Sheb 6:5) there are examples where the narrators used characters with different meanings and form in their parabolic communication. They displayed aesthetic characteristics in relating the characters and in maintaining the attention of the audience. After analysing a number of similar stories Abrahams [1967] concluded that Jesus utilised an already established genre. The story in Babylonian Talmud (B Taan 21a) is a very similar story in which the Nahum of Gamzu explained to his disciples the reason for his sufferings by narrating his failure to help a poor man.

⁵⁶ Some biblical scholars who have reviewed Young's book on *Jesus and his Jewish Parables*, point out that it is a serious mistake to use the rabbinic texts as contemporary texts of Jesus [Neusner 1990; Sweetland 1991]. Not everyone dates rabbinical parables so early but there are possible instances. It is difficult to point out their exact form and genre during this period because the rabbinical parables underwent radical editorial and redactional changes up to the time when the scribes wrote them down in the fourth century of the Christian era. Also as previously noted there is limited evidence of the use of aesthetic elements in the texts from Qumran, Josephus and Philo.

⁵⁷ The parable of the sower portrays a familiar event in the life of the sower (Mt 13:1-9; Mk 4:1-9 and Lk 8:4-8).

⁵⁸ A familiar scene is shown in the parable of the net where an action of throwing the net into the sea is compared with the kingdom (Mt 13: 47-50).

⁵⁹ Gadamer [1975:269] speaks of 'horizons' as the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from the particular vantage point. In his metaphor of 'fusion of horizon', he argues that the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. For him the hermeneutic task is to bring out the tension between the text and the present. Emmanuel [1999:122] points out that the dialogue cannot be seen as an isolated event but within the context of the past. While analysing the hermeneutic characteristics of Jesus' parables, my study highlights the way in which the historical horizon, the horizon of the present and the horizon of the future (belief) are brought together through the parabolic form. This is also an example of merging horizons. Hermeneutics is not merely a expounding the tension between the text and the present, but is a process in which the communicator and the audience are engaged in order to share and interpret their religious beliefs and worldview through certain forms of communication. As the audience's way of sharing and interpreting vary and thus there are many 'fusions of horizon' rather than a 'fusion of horizons'. In such context, the interaction can only happen between the communicator and the audience.

⁶⁰ Genesis 3:22 Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever"

⁶¹ 4Macc 7:19 - since they believe that they, like our patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, do not die to God, but live in God; 4Macc 15:3 – She loved religion more, religion that preserves them for eternal life according to God's promise; 4Macc16:25 - They knew also that those who die for the sake of God live in God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs. Other examples are found in Wis 5:15 and in Ps. Sol 3:16.

⁶² The term is used to refer to the life of the resurrection (Ps Sol 3:16; 1En 37:4; 40:9; 58:3). Philo defined the word 'eternity' as the life of the intelligible world and the word 'time' as the life of the perceptible world (Mut Nom 267). The writings of Philo show the influence of Hellenistic ideas of life. For him 'eternity' is also an equivalent of the term 'deathless' (Ebr 141). He also alludes to the simplification of the law into two main heads (Spec Leg 2. 63) to be discussed shortly.

⁶³ Mt 19:16 (question on eternal life); Mt 19:29 (will inherit eternal life); Mt 25:46 (eternal punishment and eternal life); Mk 10:30 (age to come eternal life); Lk 18:18 (question on eternal life).

⁶⁴ Ec 12:5 (eternal home); Sir 30:17 (eternal rest); 4Macc 15:3 (eternal life).

⁶⁵ Brown [1971:476-478] points out that the basic meaning of life in the Old Testament is

not immortality or life after death but complete well-being in earthly existence. Von Rad [1962:407] notes that a change was introduced by the apocalyptic writings with their expectation of a general resurrection, first apparently of the righteous (Is 26:19) and then of a resurrection of all, some to 'eternal contempt' and others to 'eternal life' (Dn 12:1-3). Whereas Bultmann [1971:833-875] argues that the Palestinian idea was replaced by the idea of immortality of the soul - a result of the influence of dualistic Hellenistic anthropology (4 Macc 7:14-19; Ps Sol 3:16; T Jud 25:4; 2 Macc 7:9).

⁶⁶ e.g. Ex 20:16,17; Lv 6:2; 19:13; Dt 5:20,21; 1 Ki 8:31.

⁶⁷ Bar 4:9 "Hearken, you neighbours of Zion, God has brought great sorrow upon me; Bar 4:14 Let the neighbours of Zion come; remember the capture of my sons and daughters, which the Everlasting brought upon them.

⁶⁸ Sir 31:15 Judge your neighbour's feelings by your own, and in every matter be thoughtful. Sir 31:31 Do not reprove your neighbour at a banquet of wine, and do not despise him in his merrymaking; speak no word of reproach to him, and do not afflict him by making demands of him. Sir 34:22 To take away a neighbour's living is to murder him; to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood.

⁶⁹ In the Dead Sea Scroll---The Manual of Discipline 1QS. 1: 9-10 it is stated:

... in order to love all the sons of light, each one according to his lot in God's plan and to detest all the sons of darkness, each one according to his blame in God's vindication.....2:24 For all shall be in a single community of truth...of compassionate love.... towards each other....5:25 Each should reproach his fellow in truth, in meekness and in compassionate love for the man...

⁷⁰ There are references to dealings with strangers. In B Ger 61b, it is stated: 'And a stranger shalt thou not wrong, neither shalt thou oppress him'. The meaning of this word neighbour was not completely extended to anyone who is near by or to any stranger. Yet the relationship with strangers is often discussed with a demand for a positive attitude, though implicitly. In B.Taan 21a, the master explains to his disciples about his failure to help a dying man and the punishment for such failure. This type of narrative ultimately emphasises the act of love regardless of the identity. This shows that a much wider interpretation of the love of neighbour existed alongside the narrow definition of this word.

⁷¹ Around 63 BCE, the author of Psalms of Solomon (8) accused "them", obviously priests, of incest, adultery, making arrangements to trade wives and plundering the temple treasury. The Dead Sea commentary on Habbakuk condemned 'the wicked priest' for committing abominable deeds and defiling the temple (1QpHab 12:8).

⁷² There are Inter Testamental references where the character of priests and Levites are used together. In 1st Esdras the terms 'priests and Levites' are used together fifteen times. They represented the Jewish religious cult (1 Es 1:7,10,21; 2:8; 5:46; 7:6,9,10; 8:5,10,59,60,69,96; 9:37). There are references to Levitical priests as well (1Es 5:56,63). In the book of Jubilees (19:18), the descendants of Levi were chosen for the priesthood and as Levites that they might minister before the Lord.

⁷³ For Stein the gospel writers were not merely editors who glued and pasted various traditions together but rather theologians who interpreted these traditions to meet the needs of their communities. The first '*sitz im leben*' is the context of Jesus' audience in which this parable could have been understood in a different way. The question of neighbour was well discussed by the Jewish scholars at that time [Stein 1978:291]. Stein notes that in its original context the parable is a powerful attack against racial and religious bigotry as well as a new revelation of the limitless dimension of the command to love one's neighbour.

Stein [1978:292] argues that the entire parable fits well with the Lukan theme that the time of salvation had come and that, whereas the religious elite have rejected their invitation, the outcasts of Israel have accepted and now share in the Messianic Banquet. For him this is the third '*sitz im leben*' in which Luke emphasises the motive of love and grace towards the outcasts of society in his gospel [1978:290]. It is generally agreed that this material in Luke (10:25-37) underwent changes even after the time of Jesus and thus reflected the context of the early Christian church and/or of the writer. It was already noted that Jesus' followers and the gospel writers continued to participate in the construction of meanings that arose from the teachings of Jesus.

Paffenroth [1997:103] notices that the parable of the Good Samaritan has the characteristics of 'L' parables (such as a dialogue/monologue, questions, and contrasting characters, example story type and the crisis in the middle). By editing this dialogue and by adding it to the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke made the parable portray the social issues of his time (such as conversion among Samaritans who need to be seen as model Christians in Acts 8:4-8,14-25). Sanders [1987:3] notes that the Jewish religious leaders in Luke-Acts are seen as enemies of Jesus and the church. It needs to be noted that the parable and the dialogue might reflect the issues from more than one context. Within this ambiguity, it can be argued that the process of constructing meanings continued at the time of oral transmission and at the time of writing in order to interpret the content of the parable within the context of the audience.

⁷⁴ A few implicit examples are - Lk 2:1; 12:16; 13:1.

⁷⁵ Some of the Lukan narratives mediate such issues. E.g. Lk 1:53; 3:10-14; 6:20; 20:9-16.

⁷⁶ Lk 2:8 (shepherds); 5:12-16 (lepers); 17:11-19 (lepers); 21:1-4 (a poor widow).

⁷⁷ As I have already noted *māšāl* is a term with wider reference in the Old Testament. The word 'parable' also referred to a wide range of forms and genre.

⁷⁸ The Samaritan is presented as a hero in the parable (Lk 10: 33-36); The return of a Samaritan leper is appreciated (Lk 17:16); The Samaritans' attitude towards Jesus is described (Jn 4:39,40).

⁷⁹ The New Testament has some references where Samaritans are not portrayed positively. Samaritans refuse Jesus entry into their village - Lk 9:53; Jews do not mix with Samaritans - Jn 4:9; Jews referred to Jesus as Samaritan - Jn 8:48.

⁸⁰ Jesus' audience would have expected the priest to help because there are provisions in the law that commands a Jew to offer help to his neighbour who is suffering. They would not have expected him to help because of priests' unpopularity during that time.

⁸¹ There is a description of Priesthood in the Testament of Twelve Patriarchs (T Levi 8:1-19) listing the following qualities of a priest

----- the crown of righteousness

-----the breast piece of understanding

----- the mantle of truth

----- the turban of faith

-----the ephod of prophecy (T Levi 8:2) [Hollander and De Songe 1985]

The documents of the Testament of Twelve patriarchs seem to have Christian elements in the present form. They may contain older components that were written in the later years of John Hyrcanus (109-106 BCE) by a Pharisee in the Hebrew language.

⁸² Some scholars [Jülicher 1899 and Bultmann 1968] identify this parable as an example story. For Funk [1966:204] and Crossan [1974A:74] this parable is not an example story.

⁸³ Jeremias [1963] expresses the view that Jesus was the first teacher to use parabolic instruction. Neusner [1988] suggests that the parable is a later rabbinic didactic technique that was not used until after the destruction of the temple.

⁸⁴ An example could be found in the later rabbinic writings - MidrR (LevB 24.7). In this context R.Samuel b.Nathan tells a similar parable. His parable is quoted here:

It may be compared to the case of a High Priest who was walking on the road and met a lay man who said to him 'I will walk with you'. He answered him, 'My son! I am a priest and am going along a ritually clean road. It is not the proper way for me to walk among graves. If you will come with me well and good; but if not I shall eventually have to leave you and go my way. So Moses told Israel: For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp [Slotki 1939:309-10].

Other examples are the parable of a fox and fish in B. Ber 61b.

⁸⁵ In Aboth de Rabbi Nathan (ARN 38 - The Poor Widow and Her Two Sons) one can find example story. The parables in Sifre on Numbers (134) and in Sifre on Deuteronomy (312) have the triadic form of story. In the following story, one can find a similar form, aesthetic elements and imagination in rabbinical teaching (B Taan 21 a):

It is related of Nahum of Gamzu that he was blind in both eyes, his two hands and legs were amputated, and his whole body was covered with boils and he was lying in a dilapidated house on a bed.... Thereupon his disciples said to him, Master since you are wholly righteous, why has all this befallen you? and he replied, I have brought it all upon myself. Once I was journeying on the road and was making for the house of my father-in law and I had with me three asses, one laden with food, one with drink and one with all kinds of dainties, when a poor man met me and stopped me on the road and said to me, Master give me something to eat. I replied to him, wait until I have unloaded something from the ass; I had hardly managed to unload something from the ass when the man died. I then went and laid myself on him and exclaimed, may my eyes become blind... Thereupon his pupils exclaimed, 'Alas! That we see you in such a sore plights [Neusner 1991:204].

This example clearly shows similar themes existed in story form among rabbinical traditions.

⁸⁶ In the dialogue the audience form the background even though they are not mentioned explicitly.

⁸⁷ In the Pentateuch, blood was considered in some way to represent life (Gn 9:4; Lv. 17:14; Dt. 12:23).

⁸⁸ To have this true life means to enjoy the fullness of God's blessings and gifts, which include length of days (Ps 91:16), family blessings, prosperity, security and especially fellowship with God (Dt 28:1ff; Ps 16:11; Ec 9:9). This life in God is determined by the individual and collective responsibilities to the words of the covenant. Prophets stressed this true life in God (Ezk 3:18ff; 37:5; Am 5:4,14). There was belief in some form of life after death (1Sm 28:15-16). Appreciation for natural and spiritual life was often linked too closely [Vriezen 1970:285].

⁸⁹ There are references that relate the act of keeping God's commandments and the understanding of life: e.g. Dt 6:2 - that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life; and that your days may be prolonged. Dt 28:14 - ... if you do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to

the left, to go after other gods to serve them. Dt 30:19 – I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, 30:20 loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

The true life is to live according to the law (Dt 32:46-47).

⁹⁰ e.g. Ex 20:16 - You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. 20:17 You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour's. 1Ki 8:31 - If a man sins against his neighbour and is made to take an oath, and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house,

⁹¹ Even though the concept of eternity was related to God in the Old Testament (Dt 33:27; Is 57:15), yet, the relationship between life and eternity was explicitly developed in the post-exilic writings. For example the phrase 'eternal life' is used only in Daniel 12:2. It is also essential to note the fact that further meanings of these terms might have been added due to cultural collisions, political invasions and economic changes during a long historical process even before Jesus.

⁹² Ps. 63:3 - Because thy steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you [RSV]. Ps 16:10 - For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit. Ps 16:11 Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

⁹³ 4 Macc 7:13-15. Most amazing, indeed, though he was an old man,....became young again in spirit through reason; and by reason like that of Isaac he rendered the many-headed rack ineffective. O man of blessed age and of venerable gray hair and of law-abiding life, whom the faithful seal of death has perfected! 2 Macc 7:9. And when he was at his last breath, he said, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws." Other examples - Ps Sol 3:16; T Jud 25: 4.

Cullmann [1962] argues that in primitive Christianity, as in Judaism, the Greek manner of distinguishing between time and eternity was quite foreign. Saldarini supports such argument by Cullmann by noting that "most treatments begin with the polarity between immortality (Greek) and bodily resurrection (Judaeo-Christian) as it was definitely presented by Cullmann" [1974:135].

⁹⁴ In Maccabean thought true life was increasingly seen as a gift of eternal life, life without

end (4Macc 15:3; 16:25; 17:12; 18:19).

⁹⁵ Sir 18:13; The compassion of man is for his neighbour, but the compassion of the Lord is for all living beings. He rebukes and trains and teaches them, and turns them back, as a shepherd his flock. Sir 22:23 - Gain the trust of your neighbour in his poverty, that you may rejoice with him in his prosperity; stand by him in time of affliction, that you may share with him in his inheritance. Sir 34:22 - To take away a neighbour's living is to murder him; to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood. In Inter Testamental Judaism the development of the conviction that death is not the end of human existence led to the idea of Sheol as an intermediate state where the dead await resurrection (1En 22).

⁹⁶ Wherever Luke mentions God's mercy or love, he relates it to the fear of God or love towards God. This love of God is also related to, 'Scattering the proud; putting down the mighty, exalting those of low degree, filling the hungry' (Lk 1:51-53). The people of Israel were asked to love God and to love God is to remain within the covenant (Lk 1:72). To remain within the covenant means to follow his commandments. God's love is shown as a light for revelation to the gentiles (Lk 2:32).

⁹⁷ For the Lukan Jesus the kingdom of God is related to the elimination or reversal of poverty and hunger (Lk 6:20-23). His interpretation and understanding of Jesus' ministry are also shown in relation to the poor (Lk 7:19-23), to sinners (Lk 7:40-44) and to others (Lk 15).

⁹⁸ The aesthetic elements in the story are: the attack by robbers on the unidentified traveller, the description of the traveller as a half dead man, the neglect by a priest and a Levite, the identification of the hero as 'Samaritan', the description of a Samaritan's help, his promise to return and the happy ending of the story.

⁹⁹ This story does not imply that all Samaritans would offer assistance like this Samaritan, nor does it imply that all priests and Levites would neglect such people. The story shows that in a certain context, a Samaritan happened to help but this cannot be generalised to all contexts and to all situations.

¹⁰⁰ They might be aware of the primary message of his teachings and of his methods. His parables had unexpected turns and unacceptable twists in them (e.g. in Mt 20:1-16, there was the same payment for all who worked from the morning until the evening; in Mt 18:23-35, sudden turn of the unforgiving servant; in Lk 15:11-32 two sons). His parables had three persons (e.g. Mt 25:14-30 three servants; Mt 21:33-41 three chances to tenants (||Lk 20:9-16) Mt 20:1-17 three sets of labourers; Lk 14:15-24, three refused to come to feast). His parables also had unidentified people in the beginning of the parable (e.g. Mt 21:28; Mt 21:33; Mt 25:14; Lk 15:11, Lk 16:1). These passages show that some of Jesus' parables

shared a common form and genre.

¹⁰¹ For Via [1974] a metaphor is composed of two elements: a vehicle, which is relatively well known, and a tenor which is less well known. Meaning passes from the vehicle to the tenor. The important factor in constituting a metaphor is the semantic distance or tension between vehicle and tenor which must be overcome through 'semantic motion'.

¹⁰² The word 'form' refers to story structure in the parable of the Good Samaritan in which different rules of an ancient Near Eastern story-form are applied. For example the story begins with an unidentified traveller and three persons are used to make a contrast. A happy end with a promise to return is part of this form. This differs from a genre which is essentially related to plots in the parable.

¹⁰³ Even though the meaning of the word 'neighbour' could be understood within the content of the parable or within the overall teachings of Jesus, yet, his hearers interacted according to their own background, reflecting their different contexts. For some of them the understanding of the word 'neighbour' should be widened; for others there was no need to expand it rather it confirmed what they had already believed in.

¹⁰⁴ His hearers might not have expected the priest and Levite to offer help on the basis of their practice. Yet, they could have expected them to offer help on the basis of humanitarian concern which was shared by the law. Introducing different expectations and meanings of these characters in the parable highlights this contradiction.

¹⁰⁵ This can also be noted in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk16:19-31); the hearers were already aware of the expressions such as *Hades*, *bosom of Abraham*, the characters such as the *rich man* and the *poor man* (Lazarus) and their meanings.

¹⁰⁶ e.g. Mt 9:10-11; Mk 2:15-16; Lk 5:30; Lk 15:1;.

¹⁰⁷ When the Pharisees criticised Jesus' disciples for not washing their hands before eating meals, Jesus told them a parable:

There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him (Mk 7:14-15).

His disciples asked him about the parable. Boucher [1977:66] notes that for Jesus no food is unclean. It is the context of the story that shaped the overall meanings of the parable. He seemed to have been amazed at their inability to understand the link between the immediate context and the parable.

¹⁰⁸ e.g. What man of you (Mt 12:11); What profits a man to gain the whole world (Mk 8:36; Lk 9:25).

¹⁰⁹ e.g. the context of an unforgiving servant - Mt 18:23-34.

¹¹⁰ Two similar ancient stories are identified: one with an Egyptian background [Bauckham 1991]; another with a Greco-Roman tradition [Hock 1987] which are dated before Jesus.

¹¹¹ Jesus' real intention was to bring his hearers closer to God through the parables. When he told the parables, he wanted his hearers to realise certain meanings that were relevant to them. Meanings related to alms-giving were already known among his hearers.

¹¹² Luke's note on many other writers [1:2-3] and John's reference to many other deeds of Jesus [21:25] reveal the fact that there were many other sayings and deeds that were not recorded. The writers did not select many of the sayings and deeds of Jesus. They might not have found their relevance to their context. Some of these sayings were available in a disorderly manner.

¹¹³ Under the cover of darkness Pilate, the procurator from 26-36CE, sneaked Roman troops into Jerusalem bearing standards inscribed with Roman images. This so deeply offended the Jews that Pilate withdrew his troops. In 37-41, the Emperor Gaius sought to introduce the imperial cult into the temple itself and Jews threatened to deprive Rome of its tribute. Due to King Agrippa's intercession violence was averted and the order was cancelled [Roetzel 1987:17-19].

¹¹⁴ Isaiah says, "for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Is 6:5). For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us. (Is 33:22).

The prophet Zechariah also makes a similar remark in 14:9, "And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one".

¹¹⁵ Is 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Is 9:7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Mi 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Eph'rathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

¹¹⁶ Is 49:22 Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. 49:23 Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you...Mi 4:13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron and your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples, and shall devote their gain to the Lord, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth. Mi 7:12 In that day they will come to you, from

Assyria to Egypt, and from Egypt to the River, from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.

¹¹⁷ Selman [1989:171] notes the kingdoms of men are compared with metals that tarnish or beasts that perish whereas the kingdom of God is indestructible, and lasts forever.

¹¹⁸ By referring to Daniel 7:18, Dodd points out that God was considered as the King of Israel and his heavenly kingdom was effective in so far as Israel was obedient to the law [1935:35]. The changes that occurred during this period might have contributed to the diverse meanings of the phrase, 'kingdom of God'. Perrin [1963:69] argues that Jewish apocalyptic writings envisaged the earth as the stage for the final act of the eschatological drama.

¹¹⁹ The meanings of the occasion of God's intervention, the day of the Lord and the messianic Kingdom overlapped in the apocalyptic texts (I En 91-104) Some might have held an apocalyptic expectation of the kingdom (e.g. 2 Bar 48:39).

¹²⁰ Schweitzer [1954] argues that because of the failure of the Parousia to take place on the expected occasion, Jesus' plans were altered, as were his teachings. These studies work on the assumption that Jesus might not have had two different views of the kingdom. Even though in 1963 he slightly changed his views, Dodd [1935] claims that Jesus taught about the kingdom which is realisable through human obedience. Some of these discussions attempted to identify the tension between the futuristic and the present aspects of the kingdom in Jesus' teachings as a problem and thus sought to provide a solution.

Jesus' teachings also reflect a wide range of meanings about the kingdom in which its present and future characteristics are displayed in a random manner. Perrin [1963:185-90] points out the tension between the present and the future in the teachings of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God. He argues that there is a continuity between the kingdom's presence in the ministry of Jesus and its future consummation. Brandon [1967] identifies Jesus as a patriotic Jew who believed in God's exclusive rule over Israel and thought he was commissioned to prepare for its imminent enforcement. Some of these studies avoid any references that went against their arguments or interpret them to justify their own point.

¹²¹ The kingdom of God is presented in the sense of covenant and in terms of individual attainment of eternal life (Mt 7:21); as an otherworldly unexpected event (Mt 13:40-2); as a decisive future event which will result in a recognisable social order (Mt 19:28); and as present in the words and deeds of Jesus (Mt 12:28; Lk 17:20).

¹²² Mt 9:11; Mk 2:16; Lk 5:30; 15:1.

¹²³ The term 'sinner' is more severe than the one who did not commit to Pharisaic standards of ritual purity [Nolland 1993:498].

¹²⁴ Matthew (8:11) presents Jesus as one who told his hearers that many would come from the East and West to sit and eat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whereas the sons of the kingdom will be thrown. Green [1975:100] argues that the theme of 'many coming from the East and West' is Matthean. It is possible to argue that traditions were not simply handed over to the next generations. Those who had received continued to participate in the construction and reinterpretation of the meanings by relating them to their context. Emerton and Cranfield [1991:27] give six reasons to show that the word 'many' (Mt 8:11) may not refer to 'gentiles' but to the 'unfortunate ones' within the Jewish community. In its present context this is part of a more favourable view of Gentiles in later chapters of Matthew. It is possible that something of this goes back to Jesus.

¹²⁵ (e.g. 'Life after death' in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus - Lk 16:19-31; 'God's forgiveness' in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant - Mt 18:23-34)

¹²⁶ The second part of the parable (Lk 16: 27-31) introduces the belief in resurrection. Marshall [1978:632] identifies a second theme in this part of the parable, that is, if the law and the prophets are insufficient to call the rich to repentance, even the return of someone resurrected from the dead will not achieve the desired effect. Some of his hearers might have thought of Jesus as one who comes from a rich man with a warning to his brothers.

¹²⁷ Jeremias considers this narrative as a parable [1963:206-9]. Buchanan [1996:943] notes that this narrative has a certain type of imagery and is coherent with other parables.

¹²⁸ First in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus shared with his hearers some of the religious beliefs (beliefs in covenant community, eternity of life in God) and the expressions of such beliefs (such as eternal life, law and love commandments). He interacted with their beliefs indirectly by using the parabolic form. Secondly, he participated in their hermeneutic process by using the parabolic form of communication including story form, aesthetic elements (such as excitement and happy ending) and familiar characters (such as a priest, Levite and Samaritan). Thirdly, by using their context as a framework for interpretation, he shared their worldview and addressed their social issues (such as the issue of neighbour or attitude towards Samaritans). He challenged their worldview by reflecting and addressing their social issues through this form of communication.

¹²⁹ Examples of expressions of Christian beliefs are eternal life, the kingdom of God, parousia, etc.

¹³⁰ The word 'means' is used to refer to any medium or technological instrument that is used to communicate the gospel. For example radio is a means of communication.

¹³¹ The phrase 'sign of contradiction' is from Kierkegaard. In this context it means the modern forms can communicate the gospel to a wider audience by using the contemporary

images, technological means, genre and aesthetic elements. These forms can only interpret the gospel and help the readers or the listeners to establish a relationship with God. On the one hand Christian communicators can lead people to recognise certain meanings of the gospel through their participation in the process of communication and on the other hand they are also humble participants in the process of understanding and experiencing God.

¹³² Jesus shared the beliefs in eternal life, the law and love for neighbour with the lawyer even though the meanings of these phrases might have been different for both.

¹³³ For example if the audience shares television as a means and film as a form, then Christian communicators may have to use such means and forms in order to interact with them.

¹³⁴ In chapter 2 communication was defined as an ongoing process in which the communicator and the audience share and participate in order to interact among them. Christian communication is part of this ongoing process of understanding meanings for belief in God and in their life.

¹³⁵ The parable is a linguistic medium because it displays the story-telling device, popular genre, and characters to interpret beliefs and worldview that are shared by Jesus and his audience.

¹³⁶ Dharma literally means good works.

¹³⁷ The forms of folklore in Tamil Nadu are folk dances, songs, riddles, drama and rituals. They interpreted religious beliefs and related them to the realities of society in which the audience lived.

¹³⁸ For example, industrialisation forced people to move to the cities and urbanised them. This change in social context brought a change in their cultural context. Their life detached from their village community give rise to a quest for their identity in the urbanised community. Over time their worldview and belief are being influenced by such changes.

¹³⁹ In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus assumed the attack on the traveller as the reality of the day. He did not condemn it or provide a solution to eradicate it. With this assumption, Jesus interacts with the lawyer with the question of how he can be a better neighbour.

¹⁴⁰ Even though it is difficult to link the changes in their context to their worldview, there are examples where the social changes have produced a change in people's worldview.

¹⁴¹ All India Radio Internet Page - (<http://air.kode.net/about.html>) The operations of All India Radio (AIR) began formally in 1936, as a government organisation with clear objectives to inform, educate and entertain the masses. When India attained independence in 1947, AIR had a network of six stations and a complement of 18 transmitters. The coverage

was 2.5% of the area and 11% of the population. AIR today has a network of 195 broadcasting centres with 144 medium, frequency, 55 high frequency (SW) and 103 FM transmitters. The coverage is 90% of the area serving 97.3% of the people in India.

¹⁴² Lumiere Brothers introduced motion pictures in India in 1896 [Doordharshan page, <http://www.ddindia.net/bk1/content.html>].

¹⁴³ By transforming folk forms into visual forms, television and films could satisfy urban middle class people who had moved from a village background and who missed their old village forms of communication [Traber 1983].

¹⁴⁴ By 1972, people in and around Delhi - the capital of India - could view television programme every evening between 6:30-10:30. The purpose of the programmes were mainly educational and news. From 1972 to 82, there was a major expansion of the television network in India [Mitra 1993: 14-6]. There were more talk shows, quizzes, news reviews etc. After 1983, there were many more regional transmitters and a big expansion in the number of programmes. There was an increase in the number of entertainment programmes, serials, soap operas etc. Now with 18 channels, 1034 transmitters, Doordharshan (government owned television) covers 72.7% of the area and 87.4% of the people in India [<http://www.ddindia.net/bk1/content.html>].

¹⁴⁵ The following information is referred from Discover India [1999:1-3]:

India is the sixth largest economy with respect to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The reforms undertaken since July 1991 have led to a strong revival of economic growth, rapid increase in employment, reduction in poverty, a boom in exports and a decline in inflation. Growth of real GDP at factor cost, which had fallen to merely 0.8% in the crises years 1991-92, recovered within a year to reach 5.1% in 1992-93. (<http://www.meadev.gov.in/economy/ecointro.htm>).

¹⁴⁶ In India Today magazine, Bhandare [1997:1] points out that even though the committee has not yet been appointed, this is a step forward towards an independent media [<http://www.india-today.com/itoday/17111997/prasar.html>] 1-3.

¹⁴⁷ Churches involved in these programmes are Church of South India (CSI), Church of North India (CNI), Methodist churches in India and Evangelical Lutheran churches in Bihar.

¹⁴⁸ The churches in South India include the CSI churches, Lutheran and Charismatic churches.

¹⁴⁹ Foreign Missions Conference was part of North American missionary organisations – mainly from the Methodist churches.

¹⁵⁰ Far East Broadcasting Association was founded in 1954 and went on air in 1968 from the Seychelles. This is a well-known radio station among Christians in India and its operations

are described in their web page [<http://www.febc.org/feba.html>, 1999:1].

¹⁵¹ This radio station broadcasts in 45 languages (including 22 Indian) and has more than 10 studios in South and West Asia and in East Africa. The director of Far East Broadcasting Association asked the churches in Southern India to produce programmes in order to transmit through the radio station.

¹⁵² They have established their own web page to share their work [<http://www.lhmint.org/india/cmc.htm> - Lutheran Hour Ministries].

¹⁵³ Trans World Radio Web page contains history of the their broadcasting and their agenda for mission and ministry through radio.

¹⁵⁴ Many representatives of the churches including presbyters and missionaries attended this conference in which the value of using audiovisual aids was demonstrated.

¹⁵⁵ They show some castes as higher than the others. Some of these puranas (myths) do not include Dalits (outcastes) [Joshva 1989]. Some of them portray Dalits as villains.

¹⁵⁶ Rhenius was from Prussia and went to India as a missionary in 1814. He was supported by CMS and was discharged from the mission field for his radical methods in mission [Muller 1980:26].

¹⁵⁷ By making it a dogmatic and apologetic confession, the act of communicating faith becomes merely an imparting of knowledge and information about God, and about Christ, which for Kierkegaard, is a misunderstanding of Christianity (please refer to page 85 of Chapter 2).

¹⁵⁸ Please refer back to page 85 (chapter 2) for the comment on the midwife's role of the communicator. For Kierkegaard the communicator's role, like a midwife, is to help the learners (audiences) to become free and to stand by themselves in the process of believing and entering into the God-relationship [(1847) 1995:276-78]. The communicator remains anonymous in the process. Arbaugh and Arbaugh [1968:274] point out that the teacher, like a midwife, should deal with the learner where the learner is, in whatever state he or she may be, and seek to progress from that point towards the eternal. Both are concerned with seeking eternal truth.

¹⁵⁹ Please refer to page 85–86 in chapter 2. In an essentially aesthetic age if the teacher is to start where the learner is the teacher must start with the aesthetic - even though the aesthetic is incapable of expressing religious truth [Pattison 1992:72]. Kierkegaard defines aesthetic as a pleasure, which is more than an art, and as personal interest which is more than sheer pleasure. With an aesthetic attitude one is caught up in various attractive experiences of the moment, in a state of immediacy which does not reach beyond itself [Arbaugh and Arbaugh 1968:64].

¹⁶⁰ Scott [1994:62] interprets the parable of the Good Samaritan in a similar way. He notes:

Thus, to enter the kingdom of God, to experience God's ruling activity, one must become victim. This is not much of an option for those awaiting God's Messiah to bring an apocalyptic vengeance upon their enemies... few have considered with Jesus the option of rejecting the hero myth [1994:62].

¹⁶¹ Hamelink points out that the present process of globalisation is driven from above by a few nations (G-7) on the third world nations. For him "the New World Order combines an unprecedented concentration of power with a stunning parochialism" [1995:32]. He points out that the mass media enhances a world order in which the gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots' is widened. He argues that democratising the communication process is possible by focussing on the local community's development, environment, and human rights,.

¹⁶² Mitchell [1997:362] points out to a need for the preachers to listen to the cultural and communicative context outside their own discursive community. This is one of the characteristics of interactive communication.

¹⁶³ Those who do not have enough money to buy food, or disabled people, or those who are affected by natural disasters such as cyclones are identified as poor or needy people by the diocese.

¹⁶⁴ There are a few examples of the church media such as Santhom - a Catholic media centre, Madras having produced similar programmes which have been successfully transmitted through Doordharshan.

¹⁶⁵ Fornberg [1995] provides a list of Indian Christian theologians (such as M M Thomas, Michael Amaladoss and Stanley Samartha) and their perspectives on other religions.

¹⁶⁶ The name means the most beautiful one and God can be the most beautiful one on earth. Some of the Indian dances are related to the Lord of dance - Siva [<http://www.geopages.com/RodeoDrive/1415/nataraja.html>]. But using such poetical form and dances does not mean that Christian communicators adopt the ideologies behind such gods. These forms are related to Hindu gods and ideologies. That is one of the reasons the church finds it difficult to use such forms.

¹⁶⁷ The Indian Broadcasting Bill 1997 - A Summary (<http://www.ipan.com/articles/1606bill.htm>). This bill allows the government to set up a Broadcasting Authority of India which will have power to give licences for different broadcasting such as radio, television and other home broadcasting in India.

¹⁶⁸ Recently the government allowed private Indian companies to run their own FM radio stations. There are a number of satellite channels transmitting regional programmes.

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Appendix A

Abbreviations

1QH	The hymns (Qumran)
1QIs ^{a,b}	The Isaiah Scroll (Qumran)
1QM	The war rule (Qumran)
1QS	The community rule (Qumran)
Ant	Antiquitates Judaicae (Josephus – Jewish Antiquities)
Ap	Contra Apionem (Josephus – Against Life)
ARN	Aboth de Rabbi Nathan
BCE	Before Christian Era
B.Shabb	Babylonian Talmud Shabbath
BJ	Bellum Judaicum (Josephus – Jewish War)
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CD	Damascus rule (Qumran)
CE	Christian Era
Cher	De Cherubim (Philo)
Conf Ling	De Confusione Linguarum (Philo)
Conf	Confessiones (Augustine)
Decal	De Decalogo (Philo)
Ebr	De Erbietate (Philo)
GTh	Gospel of Thomas
Haer	Adversus Haereses (Irenaeus)
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
Jdt	Judith (Apocrypha)
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
Jub	Jubilees
M	Mishna
Midr R	Midrashim Rabbath
Midr	Midrash
Mut Nom	De Mutatione Nominum (Philo)
NTS	New Testament Studies
Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh (Apocrypha)
Ps Sol	Psalms of Solomon
Serm	Sermones (Augustine)
Sib Or	Sibylline Oracles
Sir	Ecclesiastical or the Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach
Spec Leg	De Specialibus Legibus (Philo)
T Dan	Testament of Daniel
T	Tosefta
TDYM	Tirunelveli Diocese Youth Mission
Tob	Tobit (Apocrypha)
Vit	Vita (Josephus)
WACC	World Association for Christian Communication
TDCM	Tirunelveli Diocese Children Mission
WCC	World Council of Churches
Y.Shabb	Yerusalem Talmud Shabbath

Appendix B

Texts and (possible) Dates.

Ecclesiasticus -----	180 BCE
The Book of Daniel-----	150 BCE Old Greek (165 BCE)
chapters 7-12	167-165 BCE
Jubilees-----	150 BCE (190-140 BCE)
Sibylline Oracles ----	150 BCE
Testament of Twelve Patriarchs	Later part of second century BCE
	Christian interpolation
Psalms of Solomon-----	48 BCE
Testament of Moses-----	6-30CE
The Apocalyptic Moses-----	70 CE
Apocalypse of Abraham-----	70-100CE
Testament of Abraham-----	1 st century CE
II Enoch----	1 st century CE or later
Sibylline Oracles Book IV-----	80 CE
Tobid-----	Early 2 nd century BCE
Baruch---	Later than 164 BCE
I Maccabees----	Accounts of 167-134 BCE
II Maccabees----	Accounts of 175-160 BCE
Judith-----	150 BCE
additions	140-130 BCE
I Esdas -----	300 BCE
Wisdom---	40 CE
II Esdras(4 th Ezra)-----	90 CE
	Chapter 1,2,15,16 are possible Christian additions
II Baruch-----	90 CE
III Baruch-----	90 CE
Josephus Antiquities-----	93-94 CE
War----	75-79 CE
other works-----	After 79 CE
Philo went with delegation from Alexandrian Jewish community to Gaius Caligula in 40 CE.	
Mishnah-----	Around 200 CE
Aboth----	250 CE
Sifra----	300 CE
Tosefta----	3 rd to 4 th century CE
Midrash----	from 2 nd century CE
	but some are from much later period
Talmud of Babylonia----	after 600 CE
Talmud of the land of Israel---	400-450 CE

[references - Goldingay 1989; Russell 1964; Kee et al 1997; Osterley 1935].

Appendix C –Map

